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SOPHIA.

BY

Mrs. CHARLOTTE LENNOX.

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In TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

BY

BRITISH MUSEUM

Mrs. CHARLOTTE LENNOX.

LONDON:

Printed for JAMES FLETCHER, in St. Paul's Church-Yard. MDCCXLII.

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SOPHIA;

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made haste to lead her to a little
bench of turf which was near them.

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Sophia recovering, tho' in much
to repress her
devoured, to
smiling through the
her charming
" this
" alarm you
" double not be, with the assistance
" of heaven, I shall bear this change
" intuit with proper fortitude."

" How worthy are you, my good
" child, of better
Mr. Herbert; then taking a letter
out of his pocket, " My first de-
" sign," pursued he, " was to seek

SOPHIA.

CHAP. XVIII.

Harriot's Artifices produce the desired Effect on the unsuspecting Sophia.

WHEN they arrived at Mrs. Lawson's, Sophia, who little expected such a visit, had wandered, as usual, in the wood, accompanied with Dolly: Mrs. Lawson immediately sent Fanny in search of her: and Harriot, expressing an impatience to see her sister, went along with her.

They found Sophia sitting under an oak, with Mrs. Gibbons on one

ſide of her, and Dolly on the other; for the old gentlewoman was prevailed upon by Sophia to endure the company of the innocent girl, who had never offended her; and Dolly, inſtructed by her lovely friend, made good uſe of theſe opportunities to recover her favour.

William leaned on a branch cloſe by Sophia, to whom he addreſſed his diſcourſe, while his eyes often ſtole tender glances at his beloved Dolly. Harriot, when ſhe approached, cried out affectedly, "Upon my word, "ſiſter, you have a brilliant aſſem-"bly here; I did not expect to find "you in ſuch good company."

Sophia, ſurpriſed to ſee her ſiſter, ran haſtily to meet her, and embracing her kindly, enquired with a ſweet anxiety for her mother, and whether ſhe alſo had been ſo good as to viſit her. Harriot ſcarce anſwered her queſtion; her attention was all fixed upon Wil-

William: ſo handſome a youth ſeemed worthy to feel the influence of her charms; and all the artillery of her eyes was inſtantly levelled againſt him. Having returned his reſpectful bow with an affected courteſy, and the faſhionable toſs of the head, ſhe deigned to take ſome little notice of Mrs. Gibbons, and honoured Dolly with a careleſs glance, whoſe amiable figure, however, attracted a ſecond look; and after examining her with an inquiſitive eye, ſhe turned away with a little expreſſion of ſcorn in her countenance, and again attacked William, practiſing a thouſand airs to ſtrike him; all which he beheld with the utmoſt indifference.

Sophia, being impatient to ſee her mother, took leave of Mrs. Gibbons; but Harriot, who had a new conqueſt in view, was unwilling to go ſo ſoon, profeſſing herſelf inchanted with the

place, and declaring ſhe would turn ſhepherdeſs.

Sophia told her, ſmiling, that ſhe was ſure that ſort of life would not pleaſe her.

"Oh! how can you think ſo," cried Harriot, "is not the dreſs ex-"ceſſively becoming? then love in "theſe woods is ſo tender and ſin-"cere! I will engage there is not "a nymph in this hamlet whoſe "frown would not drive her lover to "deſpair: own the truth now," ſaid ſhe, turning with a lively air to William, "are you not violently in "love?"

The youth bowed, bluſhed, and ſighed; and not daring to look at his miſtreſs, he ſuffered his eyes, full as they were of tender expreſſion, to direct their glances towards Sophia. "I am proud to own, madam," ſaid he to Harriot, "that I have a heart "capable of the moſt ardent paſſion."

"And

"And mighty conſtant too! no doubt," interrupted Harriot with a malignant ſneer; for ſhe had obſerved the ſigh and the look, and was ready to burſt with vexation and diſappointment, to find her conqueſt obſtructed already by her ſiſter, as ſhe ſuppoſed; and being now as impatient as ſhe was before unwilling to be gone, "Come, Sophy," ſaid ſhe, taking her under the arm, "my mamma will take it ill that "you make no more haſte to ſee "her, for we ſhall return to town "immediately."

"Sure you will ſtay one night," ſaid Sophia.

"Oh not for the world!" exclaimed Harriot affectedly; "How "can you imagine I would ſtay ſo "long in an odious village, to be "ruſticated into aukwardneſs," purſued ſhe with a ſpiteful laugh,

" and aſhamed to ſhew my face in " any aſſembly in town afterwards." Saying this, ſhe courteſied diſdainfully to Mrs. Gibbons and her nephew, and tripped away, pulling her ſiſter away with her.

Dolly joined the two ladies, but walked by the ſide of Sophia, not aiming at any familiarity with the inſolent and affected Harriot; and as they purſued their way home, ſhe had the mortification to hear her lover ridiculed and deſpiſed by the diſappointed coquet, who ſuppoſed ſhe mortified her ſiſter by the contempt ſhe expreſſed for a man who had ſo little taſte as to like her.

Sophia, as well in compaſſion to poor Dolly, who ſuffered greatly upon this occaſion, as in juſtice to the amiable youth, defended him warmly, which drew ſome coarſe raillery upon her from Harriot.

When they came near to Mr.

Lawſon's houſe, the ſight of Sir Charles's chariot threw her into a fit of trembling; Harriot perceived it, and, willing to undeceive her, if ſhe hoped to find the young baronet there, "I am charged with Sir "Charles's compliments to you," ſaid ſhe; "he inſiſted upon our "uſing his chariot for this little "excurſion; my mamma and I "would fain have perſuaded him "to accompany us, but he pleaded "an engagement, and would not "come."

Dolly now looked with great concern upon her fair friend, who, ſuppreſſing a ſigh, aſked if Sir Charles was quite recovered.

"I do not know that he has been "ill," replied Harriot. "Indeed "when he came from Bath, the "fatigue he had endured with his "ſick uncle, whom he had ſat up "with ſeveral nights before he

"died, made him look a little pale "and thin; but he is now ex- "tremely well, and more gay than "ever: and it is well he is ſo," purſued ſhe, "for we have ſo much "of his company, that if he was "was not entertaining, we ſhould "find him very troubleſome."

All this was daggers to the heart of poor Sophia: thoſe pleaſing ideas which ſhe had indulged upon reading her mother's letter, that repreſented Sir Charles as having ſuffered in his health, from his endeavours to vanquiſh his paſſion for her, now vaniſhed, and left in their room a ſad conviction that ſhe was become wholly indifferent to him.

She might indeed, knowing her ſiſter's malice, have attributed what ſhe ſaid to artifice; but her manner of accounting for the alteration in Sir Charles's looks, which her fond fancy had dwelt upon ſo much, was

ſo natural, and ſo full of probability, that ſhe could expect no artifice there.

Every thing Harriot ſaid was confirmed by facts, which left no room for doubt: his aſſiduity to Harriot, his neglect of her, appeared but too plain. Did he not lend his chariot for a viſit in which he would not ſhare? Did he not ſend his compliments in a manner that ſhewed his heart was ſo much at eaſe, that he felt not even any reſentment for her leaving him? Could there be ſtronger proofs of indifference than theſe?

Such were her thoughts, and her heart was ſo oppreſſed by this ſudden and unexpected ſhock, that it was with difficulty ſhe reſtrained her tears. Dolly, who looked at her with tender anxiety, and ſaw her colour come and go, and her charming eyes bent on the ground, as if ſhe

feared to look up, leſt they ſhould betray her anguiſh, caſt many an angry glance at her envious ſiſter, and wiſhed her a thouſand miles off.

Sophia having a little recovered herſelf, haſtened towards her mother, who, with a face of ignorant wonder, was following Mrs. Lawſon about her little farm, aſking a thouſand queſtions, without heeding the anſwers ſhe received. Sophia approaching, paid her duty to her with her uſual tenderneſs and reſpect, which Mrs. Darnley returned with ſlightly kiſſing her cheek, telling her that ſhe thought her complexion was greatly improved, and appealed to Harriot for the truth of her obſervation.

Harriot anſwered, "That indeed "ſhe could not flatter her ſiſter ſo "much as to ſay ſhe thought ſo; "for if there was any alteration, "it was rather for the worſe."

Sophia,

Sophia, without attending to this difference of opinion, with regard to her complexion, was only ſollicitous to know if her mother had been well; and while ſhe was making ſome tender enquiries concerning her health, Mrs. Darnley, who never conſulted either time or place, ſuddenly interrupted her, to draw her aſide from the company, and aſked her abruptly, "Whether ſhe "was not ſurpriſed at Sir Charles's "indifference?"

Sophia, ſtill ſmarting with the pangs her ſiſter's diſcourſe had given her, replied, in a tone of reſentment, "That nothing now could "ſurpriſe her with regard to Sir "Charles."

"Why, to ſay the truth, So-"phia," replied Mrs. Darnley, "I "believe he has quite forgot you; "but there was a time when you "might have been happy.---Oh,

" girl, girl," purſued ſhe, kindling with anger as ſhe ſpoke, " you " were always obſtinate and con- " ceited; what a fooliſh part have " you played with all your wit! " but I am to blame to trouble " myſelf about you."

Sophia now eaſed her loaded heart by a ſhower of tears. " It " is to little purpoſe now," ſaid Mrs. Darnley, " to repent of your " imprudent behaviour; you were " too wiſe to take a parent's advice, " when it might have been uſeful: " when a man of rank and fortune " makes his addreſſes to a woman " who is inferior to him in both, " he expects a thouſand little com- " placencies and attentions from " her, which, without wounding " her honour, may convince him " that it is not to his riches ſhe ſa- " crifices herſelf."

" Ah, madam," cried Sophia, that

"that is a ſnare which has been
"fatal to many young women in
"my circumſtances. Who ſees not
"the advantages this gives a man
"whoſe aim is to ſeduce? I am
"perſuaded theſe pernicious max-
"ims are not yours, but his, for
"whoſe ungenerous purpoſe they
"are ſo well calculated."

Sophia gueſſed truly; the young baronet had often had diſcourſes of this ſort with Mrs. Darnley, who nevertheleſs took it ill that her daughter ſhould offer her ſuch an affront as to ſuppoſe ſhe did not underſtand maxims as well as Sir Charles.

Nothing is more certain than that we are never made ſo ridiculous by the qualities we have, as by thoſe we affect to have. Mrs. Darnley, with all her ignorance, aſpired to be thought witty: ſhe therefore vindicated her claim to what Sophia

phia had called maxims; no matter whether they were pernicious or not. The word maxim ſounded learnedly in her ears: ſhe told her daughter, with great aſperity, that ſhe was ſo conceited and vain of her own wit, that ſhe would allow no one elſe to have any. Sophia found it difficult enough to appeaſe her, but ſhe ſucceeded at length, and they joined the reſt of the company.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIX.

Sophia is agreeably ſurprized.

MRS. Lawſon eaſily prevailed upon her gueſts to ſtay that night and the following day, which, being Sunday, Harriot could not reſiſt the temptation of diſplaying her charms and her fine cloaths in a country church, which was ſo new a triumph, that the thoughts of it kept her waking almoſt the whole night.

The ridiculous airs ſhe aſſumed to draw the admiration of the ſimple villagers, who never ſaw any thing ſo fine and ſo gay before, and who ſtared at her with ſtupid ſurprize, made Sophia often bluſh for her: but her affected glances were chiefly directed to the beautiful youth, whoſe inſenſibility had ſo greatly mortified

mortified her pride: ſhe ſaw his eyes conſtantly turned towards the pew where ſhe ſat; but ſhe ſaw plainly that it was not her charms that drew them thither. She had no ſuſpicion that Dolly was the object of his affection, and ſenſible, to her great grief, of her ſiſter's power to charm, ſhe no longer doubted that this envied conqueſt was hers.

Thus diſappointed, ſhe appeared ſo much out of humour, and ſo impatient to return to town, that Mrs. Darnley, over whom her power was abſolute, complied with her importunity, and ſet out with her for London, as ſoon as they returned from church; notwithſtanding all the endeavours of the good curate and his wife to detain them to dinner.

Sophia was now left alone to her own melancholy reflections; this

viſit from her mother and ſiſter had produced a ſad reverſe in her ſituation: hitherto hope had not quite forſaken her: the idea of being ſtill beloved by Sir Charles leſſened all her griefs, and ſupported her amidſt the doubt and anxiety which his myſterious conduct had involved her in: his indifference, ſo apparent in her ſiſter's account of him, gave her pangs unfelt before: and never till now did ſhe think herſelf unhappy; for, unperceived by herſelf, ſhe had encouraged a ſecret hope that the paſſion ſhe had inſpired him with, would not be eaſily ſubdued; and that perhaps all which ſhe had thought exceptionable in his conduct, proceeded not from a ſettled deſign to the prejudice of her honour, but from that irreſolution and ſlowneſs with which a man, too ſenſible of his ſuperiority in birth and fortune, proceeds

in an affair of marriage, where he has no obſtacles to fear, and where every thing depends upon himſelf.

She now perceived the neceſſity of baniſhing Sir Charles from her heart; but at the ſame time, ſhe perceived all the difficulty of the taſk. Though aſhamed of her tears, ſhe wept, and paſſionately exclaimed againſt her own weakneſs, which had kept her in a deluſion ſo fatal to her peace. She continued the whole day in her chamber, wholly abſorbed in melancholy thoughts.

Dolly, who knew enough of her ſituation to gueſs the cauſe of this new affliction, was grieved to find herſelf excluded as well as the reſt of the family; and although ſhe ardently wiſhed to conſole her, yet ſhe durſt not intrude uncalled upon her retirement. While ſhe waited impatiently for her appearance, a viſitor arrived, who ſhe knew would

would be welcome to her charming friend. As ſoon as ſhe perceived him, ſhe flew with eager haſte to inform Sophia, and, tapping at her door, told her in a joyful voice, that Mr. Herbert was juſt alighted.

Sophia, ſurpriſed at the news, inſtantly opened her chamber-door, and ſmiling tenderly upon the charming girl, to whom ſhe excuſed herſelf for her long abſence, haſtened to receive the good old man, who, after ſome affectionate enquiries concerning her health, rallied her upon the melancholy that appeared in her countenance.

Sophia bluſhed and fixed her eyes on the ground, not a little ſurpriſed at his talking to her in that manner; and when with a baſhful air, ſhe looked up again, and ſaw a more than uſual chearfulneſs in his eyes, her confuſion encreaſed, and for a few moments ſhe could

could not help feeling ſome reſentment againſt her benefactor, for thus diverting himſelf with her uneaſineſs.

Mr. Herbert whoſe thoughts were wholly employed on the pleaſing news he brought, did not perceive how much his behaviour embarraſſed her: to prevent his renewing a ſubject ſo diſagreeable, ſhe talked of the viſit her mother and ſiſter made her.

Mr. Herbert aſked her, "If "they had mentioned Sir Charles, "and what ſhe thought of him "now?"

"I think of him as I ought "to do," replied Sophia, with ſome warmth, "I deſpiſe him."

"Be not too raſh, my dear child," ſaid Mr. Herbert; "if "your ſiſter, whoſe malice I "well know, has ſuggeſted any "thing

" thing to Sir Charles's diſadvan-
" tage, be aſſured ſhe deceives
" you; for I am convinced he not
" only loves you, but loves you
" with honour."

Sophia, who from the firſt words Mr. Herbert uttered, had been in great agitation, as expecting ſomething extraordinary, was ſo overwhelmed with ſurprize at what ſhe heard, that her ſpeech and colour forſaking her, ſhe remained pale, ſilent, and motionleſs in her chair.

Mr. Herbert, perceiving how powerfully this news operated on her ſpirits, began to be apprehenſive of the conſequences, and was riſing haſtily to give her ſome aſſiſtance, when Sophia, rouſed to recollection by this motion of her venerable friend, and aſhamed of the extreme ſenſibility ſhe had diſcovered, apologiſed

giſed for it with a charming modeſty, that greatly affected the good old man, who, if he had known in what melancholy thoughts ſhe had paſſed the day, would have told her with more caution, a circumſtance that raiſed her at once from deſpair to hope, and produced ſo great a change in her ſituation.

As we are never ſo ready to fear a diſappointment as when we are neareſt the completion of our wiſhes, Sophia, with a ſweet apprehenſiveneſs, which yet ſhe laboured to conceal, hinted her doubts of the baronet's ſincerity; Mr. Herbert anſwering explicitly to theſe half expreſſed doubts, told her, that he was fully perſuaded Sir Charles would act like a man of honour. "I will "give you an exact account," ſaid he to her, "of what has paſſed be-

" tween us, from which you may " judge yourſelf of his conduct:" he then took a letter out of his pocket, and deſired her to read it.

CHAP.

CHAP. XX.

Mr. Herbert acquaints Sophia with the Reſult of the Interview between Sir Charles and him.

SOPHIA, trembling a little at the ſight of Sir Charles's hand-writing, took the billet, and found it contained a meſſage from him to Mr. Herbert, requeſting in very earneſt terms, the favour of an interview, and an offer to wait upon him at any hour he ſhould appoint.

"You may be ſure," ſaid Mr. Herbert, receiving back the billet which Sophia gave him without ſpeaking a word, "that I did not "ſuffer Sir Charles to come to me; "hearing from the meſſenger that "his maſter was at home waiting "for my anſwer, I attended him

"im-

" immediately. I perceived a little " embarraſſment in his countenance " upon my firſt entrance, but that " ſoon wore off: he welcomed " me with great politeneſs, and " after thanking me for the ho- " nour I did him, in preventing " his viſit, he entered immediate- " ly upon the affair which had " occaſioned his ſending to me.

" You have, Sir, ſaid he, ſhewn " ſo truly a paternal affection for " the young lady to whom I have " paid my addreſſes, and are ſo " much eſteemed and reverenced " by her, that I think I may " without any impropriety, ad- " dreſs myſelf to you upon this " occaſion-----

" Here he pauſed, and ſeemed a " little perplexed.

" To be ſure, added he, I ought " to have done this before; my " conduct muſt have appeared ca-

"pricious both to her and you,
"and indeed it was capricious,---
"but---

"Here he paused again, and "fixed his eyes on the ground. "His frankness," pursued Mr. Herbert, "pleased me greatly, and "disposed me to give him a fa-"vourable attention.

"I cannot blame Miss Sophia, "resumed he, for acting as she has "done; my heart did homage to "her virtue at the time that I suf-"fered most from the contemptu-"ous behaviour it suggested to "her. Fain would I hope, added "he sighing, that the prejudices "she has conceived against me "have not entirely banished me "from her remembrance; the de-"licacy of my passion would be "but ill satisfied by calling so de-"serving a woman my own, unless "I could likewise boast a prefer-

"ence

"ence in her heart that left me
"no room to doubt my fortune
"had any ſhare in determining her
"in my favour.

"I know not," purſued Mr. Herbert, "whether Sir Charles expect-
"ed any anſwer to this declara-
"tion; it is certain he looked on
"me with a kind of anxious timi-
"dity, and ſtopped a moment; I
"continued ſilent, and he pro-
"ceeded in this manner.

"I know Miſs Sophia has an
"underſtanding too ſolid, and a
"mind too noble to ſuffer any con-
"ſiderations of rank and fortune to
"determine her ſolely in an affair
"upon which the happineſs of her
"life depends: ſhe would not ſure-
"ly give her hand where her heart
"did not acknowledge a prefer-
"ence. 'Tis thus I anſwer all
"thoſe doubts which my ſituation,
"and perhaps an overſtrained de-

"licacy ſuggeſt: I am impatient "to convince her of the purity of "my paſſion; and conſidering you "as her friend, her guardian, and "one who is in the place of a fa-"ther to her, I will take no ſteps "in this affair but ſuch as have "the ſanction of your approbation; "I will not even preſume to viſit "her without your permiſſion: be "you my advocate with her, tell "her I lay myſelf and fortune at "her feet, and will receive her "from your hand as the greateſt "bleſſing that heaven can beſtow "on me."

"Now, my child," purſued Mr. Herbert, looking on Sophia with a ſmile, "how would you have had "me anſwer to this diſcourſe? was "it neceſſary, think you, to play "off a few female artifices here, "and keep Sir Charles in doubt "and anxious ſuſpence, or did the

" apparent openneſs and candor of " his procedure deſerve an equal " degree of frankneſs on my part?"

" It is not to be doubted," ſaid Sophia bluſhing, " but that on this " occaſion, as on every other, you " acted with the utmoſt prudence."

" I find," reſumed Mr. Herbert, " that you are reſolved beforehand, " to approve of whatever I ſaid: " well then, I told Sir Charles, " that his preſent declaration en- " tirely ſatisfied me; that being " fully convinced of his ſincerity, " I looked upon his offer as high- " ly honourable and advantageous " to you; and that I was very ſure " you would have all the ſenſe you " ought to have of ſo generous an " affection.

" He then begged me to ſet out " immediately for this place, and " prepare you to receive a viſit " from him. This requeſt I could

"not possibly comply with, having "business in town, which would "necessarily detain me for some "hours; but I promised him to "go as soon as that was dispatched, "which probably might be in the "afternoon.

"He modestly asked my leave "to accompany me; but this I de-"clined, as fearing his sudden ap-"pearance, without your being "previously acquainted with what "had past, might occasion some "perplexity and uneasiness to you; "so it was agreed that he should "come to-morrow."

"To-morrow," replied Sophia, with an emotion she was not able to suppress.

"Yes, my child," replied the good old man, "have you any ob-"jections to this?"

"I know not," replied Sophia, with downcast eyes and a faultering accent,

accent, "what I ought to do; I "have been ſo uſed to conſider Sir "Charles's profeſſions in an unfa- "vourable point of view; my heart "has been ſo accuſtomed to ſuſ- "pect him---to guard itſelf againſt "deluſive hopes---perhaps I ought "not to admit his viſit ſo eaſily; "---perhaps I ought to reſent his "former behaviour. I own I am "greatly perplexed, but I will be "determined wholly by your ad- "vice."

Mr. Herbert ſaw her delicate ſcruples, and, to favour her modeſty, anſwered, with the authority of a guardian, "When Sir Charles "viſits you next, Miſs Sophia, he "comes to offer you his hand; he "has aſked my conſent as your "guardian and your friend, and I, "preſuming on my influence over "you in both theſe characters, "have given it freely; and how

"indeed, having your intereſt and "happineſs ſincerely at heart, could "I do otherwiſe? but if you think "his former behaviour, in which "however there were only ſuſpi- "cions againſt him, deſerves to be "reſented, at a time when thoſe "ſuſpicions are abſolutely deſtroy- "ed, you muſt go through with "your heroiſm, and ſee him no "more; for as the poet ſays,

"*He comes too near who comes to be denied.*

"ſo he has offended too much who "needs a pardon."

Sophia, who felt all the force of this reaſoning, anſwered only by a bluſhing ſilence. Mr. Herbert then told her, that Sir Charles had declared to him that he would make the ſame ſettlements on her as had been ſtipulated for his mother; for he added, with equal delicacy and

tenderneſs,

tenderneſs, "Miſs Sophia, in vir-
"tue, wit, good-ſenſe, and every
"female excellence, brings me an
"immenſe portion."

"Sir Charles," purſued Mr. Her-
bert ſmiling, "by a ſtrange contra-
"diction, which is, I ſuppoſe, al-
"ways found in lovers, though he
"was impatient to have me with
"you, yet could not help detain-
"ing me to have the pleaſure of
"talking of you: he painted to me
"very naturally, the uneaſineſs he
"had ſuffered from your ſuppoſed
"contempt of him: he told me,
"that he was at one time deter-
"mined to travel, in order to efface
"you from his remembrance;
"but, (ſaid he, riſing and unlock-
"ing a cabinet, from which he
"took out a paper and put into my
"hands,) you ſhall judge whether
"amidſt all my reſentment I did
"not ſtill love Miſs Sophia; that

"is my will, which I ordered to "be drawn up previous to my intended journey."

"He then, to ſpare me the "trouble of reading it all through, "pointed to the place where you "was mentioned, and I found he "had bequeathed you an eſtate of "four hundred pounds a-year for "life, and five thouſand pounds "to be diſpoſed of as you pleaſ-"ed."

This laſt circumſtance touched Sophia ſo much that tears filled her eyes; ſhe ſighed, and turned her head aſide to conceal her emotion, while Mr. Herbert, without ſeeming to obſerve it, continued to repeat to her ſeveral expreſſions uſed by Sir Charles, which ſhewed the greatneſs of his affection, and his veneration for her virtues.

"We parted at length," purſued Mr. Herbert, "extremely

"well

"well satisfied with each other, "and to-morrow, or next day, at "fartheſt, you may expect to ſee "Sir Charles here; for he told me, "that if he received no ill news "from me, he would conclude I "had prepared him a favourable "reception; and, preſuming on "this hope, he would immediate-"ly ſet his lawyer to work to "prepare the writings, that no-"thing might be left undone "which could convince you of "the ſincerity of his affections; "therefore, my dear child, ſet "your heart at reſt; and ſince "providence has thought fit to "reward your piety and virtue, "receive with humble gratitude "that fortune to which you are "raiſed, and which puts it ſo "largely in your power to do good. "I will now leave you," ſaid the good old man riſing, "to your own

" reflections; I have ſcarce ſpoke
" a word yet to our kind friends
" here, for I was ſo impatient to
" ſee you, that I left them very
" abruptly."

MR. Herbert had no ſooner left the room, than Sophia, in an ardent ejaculation, thanked heaven for thus relieving her from her diſtreſs: but it was long ere the tumult in her mind raiſed by ſuch unhoped for happy news ſubſided, and gave place to that calm recollection which topped a thouſand pleaſing ideas, and filled her with the faireſt emotions of gratitude, tenderneſs, and joy.

She was now freed from thoſe tormenting doubts, which made her conſider her tenderneſs for Sir Charles as a crime, and occaſioned ſo much painful ſtruggles in her mind. What joy to reflect that the

CHAP.

CHAP. XXI.

Sophia is threatened with a new Diſappointment.

MR. Herbert had no ſooner left the room, than Sophia, in an ardent ejaculation, thanked heaven for thus relieving her from her diſtreſs: but it was long ere the tumult in her mind raiſed by ſuch unhoped for happy news ſubſided, and gave place to that calm recollection which ſupplied a thouſand pleaſing ideas, and filled her with the ſofteſt emotions of gratitude, tenderneſs, and joy.

She was now freed from thoſe tormenting doubts, which made her conſider her tenderneſs for Sir Charles as a crime, and occaſioned ſo many painful ſtruggles in her mind. What joy to reflect that the

the man she loved was worthy of her affection! how pleasing was the prospect that opened to her view; to be blest with the power of shewing her gratitude to her friends, her piety to her mother; to repay her sister's unkindness with acts of generosity; and indulge the benevolence of her heart in relieving every distress which fell within her power to relieve!

These were the advantages which she promised herself in the change of her fortune, and for these her grateful heart lifted itself up every moment in thanks and praise to that providence that bestowed them on her.

While Sophia was thus absorbed in thought, Dolly opened the door, and running up to her, eagerly cried, "Tell me true, my dear "miss, has not Mr. Herbert "brought you some good news?

"I am

" I am ſure he has; I never ſaw
" him ſo joyful in my life: and you
" look glad too," purſued ſhe, peering in her face with a ſweet earneſtneſs. " May I not aſk you,
" Miſs Darnley, what this good
" news is?"

" You may, my dear," ſaid Sophia ſmiling, " but not now; you
" ſhall know all ſoon. At pre-
" ſent I would rather talk of your
" affairs."

" Indeed I am greatly obliged to
" you, miſs," ſaid Dolly, " for
" what you have done for me. Mrs.
" Gibbons ſeems almoſt as kind to
" me as ever ſhe was, and you
" have talked ſo ſenſibly to my mo-
" ther, that ſhe repents of her be-
" haviour to Mrs. Gibbons: and
" ſhe likes Mr. William ſo well,
" that I am ſure ſhe would be glad
" to be reconciled to her."

" That

"That is what I have been la-
"bouring at all this time," reſum-
ed Sophia. "If Mrs. Lawſon can be
"perſuaded to make ſome conceſ-
"ſions to the fantaſtick old gentle-
"woman, all may go well yet:
"it ſhall be my care to bring them
"together; and if my endeavours
"to produce a reconciliation fail,
"perhaps I may be able to engage
"a more powerful mediator in your
"intereſt."

Sophia had Sir Charles in her thoughts, who ſhe doubted not would readily undertake the cauſe of the diſtreſſed lovers, and poſſibly add ſomething to her Dolly's portion, to leſſen the inequality there was between them in that point. She ſpoke with ſuch a chearful confidence, that Dolly, full of hope and joy, thanked her with artleſs tranſports of gratitude that moved her even to tears.

The

The next day, though in expectation of ſeeing Sir Charles, her heart laboured with a thouſand emotions; yet kindly attentive to the affairs of her friend, ſhe reſolved to make Mrs. Gibbons a viſit, to prepare the way for the hoped for interview between her and Mrs. Lawſon. As ſoon as ſhe had diſengaged herſelf from Mr. Herbert, ſhe ſet out alone for Mrs. Gibbons's houſe; but ſcarcely had ſhe croſſed the firſt field when ſhe ſaw William, who who was as uſual, ſauntering about Mr. Lawſon's grounds, in hopes of ſeeing his miſtreſs.

Sophia beckoned to him, and he eagerly flew to meet her; for, next to Dolly, he thought her the moſt charming woman in the world; and he adored her for the goodneſs with which ſhe intereſted herſelf in his and his Dolly's happineſs.

When

When he drew near, Sophia told him she was going to visit his aunt; the youth respectfully expressed his concern that his aunt could not have that honour; she was gone, he said, to visit a relation who lived a few miles up the country.

Sophia then told him the design upon which she was going, and the favourable disposition Mrs. Lawson was in. "I am persuaded," said she, "all might be made up, if "we could but bring them toge-"ther. Mrs. Lawson only wants "opportunity to repair her fault; "but how shall we contrive to give "her this opportunity? what expe-"dient can we find out to overcome "your aunt's obstinacy, and prevail "upon her to enter Mrs. Lawson's "door again?"

"I know one, madam," said the youth, "which I think would "do."

Sophia

Sophia concluding from the timidity of his look, that ſhe was concerned in this expedient, preſt him to ſpeak freely, aſſuring him ſhe would aſſiſt to the utmoſt of her power.

"My aunt, madam," ſaid he, "is as you know a great obſerver "of forms: ſhe would not for the "world fall under the cenſure of "having failed in any part of cere- "mony or good breeding; now, "madam, if you would be pleaſed "to make a point of her return- "ing your viſit, and permit me to "tell her that you are offended "with her neglect, and that you "inſiſt upon this proof of her po- "liteneſs, I am perſuaded ſhe will "come."

"Well," ſaid Sophia, ſmiling, "if you are of opinion this will "do, you have my conſent to ſay "whatever you think will affect her "moſt;

"moſt; make me as angry and as
"ceremonious as you pleaſe."

"Nothing ſhall be wanting on
"my part to promote the ſucceſs
"of this affair," added ſhe, with a graver look and accent; "for I
"believe you have a ſincere affec-
"tion for my young friend, and I
"ſhall not be at reſt till I ſee you
"both happy."

The youth, in whoſe breaſt the ſweet benevolence of her looks and words excited the ſtrongeſt tranſports of gratitude, not able to find words to expreſs his ſenſe of her goodneſs, ſuddenly threw himſelf at her feet, and kiſſed her hand with a mixture of tenderneſs and awe.

Sophia, ſmiling at this ſally, ſtepped back a little; upon which he roſe up, and, with a graceful confuſion, paid her his thanks: ſhe again repeated her promiſe of ſerving him, and took leave: he bowed

ed low, following her for ſome time with his eyes, and ſent a thouſand kind wiſhes after her.

Sophia, at her return, acquainted Dolly with what had paſſed between her lover and her, and filled her with pleaſing hopes of the ſucceſs of his ſcheme: but now the day wore away, ſhe was in continual expectation of ſeeing Sir Charles; her heart throbbed with anxiety; every noiſe ſhe heard, ſounded like the trampling of horſes, and then an univerſal trembling would ſeize her. She dreaded, yet wiſhed for his arrival; and at every diſappointment ſhe ſighed, and felt her heart ſink with tender deſpondency.

Such were her agitations, till the evening being far advanced, ſhe gave up all hope of his coming that night. Mr. Herbert had aſſigned a very pleaſing reaſon for his viſit being deferred till the next day;

and,

and, her mind growing more compoſed, ſhe went in ſearch of the good old man, who, Dolly told her, was gone to walk in the meadows behind the houſe; for ſhe had kept herſelf out of his ſight as much as poſſible, unwilling that he ſhould obſerve her emotions. She ſaw him at a diſtance, walking with a ſlow pace, and ſhe perceived he obſerved her; but to her great ſurprize, ſhe ſaw him croſs into another field, and take a quite contrary way, on purpoſe to avoid her.

Struck with this little accident, ſhe ſtood ſtill, and pauſed a few moments: ſhe felt herſelf ſtrangely alarmed, yet wondered why ſhe ſhould be ſo, and took her way back again to the houſe with ſad forebodings on her mind.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXII.

Sophia ſuſpects the Cauſe of her Lover's myſterious Conduct.

WHEN Mr. Herbert returned from his walk, and met the curate and his little family at ſupper, Sophia, who heedfully obſerved him, ſaw an alteration in his countenance, which realized all her melancholy apprehenſions, and convinced her that ſome new misfortune awaited her: his eyes, which ſtudiouſly avoided her's, expreſſed nothing but grief and confuſion; but he retired ſo early to his chamber, that Sophia, finding there was no hopes of explaining himſelf that night, paſſed it in an anxiety of mind, which ſuffered her not to taſte the leaſt repoſe. Early in the morning he knocked at her door,

and

and desired her to join him in the garden; she was already dress't, and instantly complied.

As soon as she came up to him, he took her hand, and press'd it affectionately, but spoke not a word.

Sophia, who feared as much as she wished to know what had happened, had not power to ask for an explanation; so they both continued silent for some minutes.

At length Mr. Herbert told her he was going to London; Sophia, in a faultering accent, asked him what had happened to occasion this sudden resolution?

"Alas! my dear child," said the good old man, in great emotion, "I "am ashamed and grieved to tell "you that——Sir Charles has, I "fear, deceived me."

Although Sophia had reason to expect some sad reverse of fortune, and had endeavoured to prepare her-

self

ſelf for it, yet this fatal confirmation of her fears ſhocked her ſo much, that Mr. Herbert, who ſaw a death-like paleneſs overſpread her face, and felt her hand cold and trembling, fearing ſhe would faint, made haſte to lead her to a little bench of turf which was near them.

Sophia recovering, ſaw ſo much concern in his looks, that ſtruggling to repreſs her own anguiſh, ſhe endeavoured to comfort him, and, ſmiling through the tears that filled her charming eyes, "Let not "this inſtance of my weakneſs "alarm you, ſir," ſaid ſhe; "and "doubt not but, with the aſſiſtance "of heaven, I ſhall bear this ſtrange "inſult with proper fortitude."

"How worthy are you, my good "child, of better fortune!" ſaid Mr. Herbert; then taking a letter out of his pocket, "My firſt de-"ſign," purſued he, "was to ſeek

" ſome explanation of this myſte-
" rious letter, before I made you
" acquainted with it, but I per-
" ceived that my too apparent un-
" eaſineſs had alarmed you, and I
" thought it would be leſs cruel to
" inform you of the whole matter
" than to leave you in doubt and un-
" certainty: this letter was deliver-
" ed to me yeſterday in the even-
" ing, by one of Sir Charles's ſer-
" vants, juſt as I was walking out
" towards the road, in hopes of
" meeting his maſter. My ſur-
" priſe at receiving a letter, when
" I expected to ſee himſelf, made
" me open it inſtantly, without aſk-
" ing the ſervant any queſtions, and
" while I was reading it he went
" away, doubtleſs being directed to
" do ſo."

Mr. Herbert then gave the letter to Sophia, who, unfolding it with trembling emotion, found it was as follows: " SIR,

" SIR,

" Since it is impoſſible my mar-
" riage with Miſs Sophia can ever
" take place, I could wiſh you would
" look upon all that paſſed between
" us upon that ſubject, as a dream:
" I dreamt indeed, when I ima-
" gined there was a woman in the
" world capable of a ſincere attach-
" ment; and I ought to be aſham-
" ed to own, that upon ſo deluſive
" a hope I was ready to act in op-
" poſition to the general maxims of
" the world, and be pointed at as a
" ſilly romantic fellow. However,
" I beg you will aſſure the young
" lady, that as I have no right to
" blame her conduct, ſo I have not
" the leaſt reſentment for it, and
" am ſo perfectly at eaſe on this
" occaſion, that I can with great

" ſincerity congratulate her on her " approaching happineſs.

" I am, Sir,

" Your humble ſervant,

" CHARLES STANLEY."

Although this letter gave Sophia a ſad certainty of her misfortune, yet it relieved her from thoſe worſt pangs which a heart in love can feel, the belief of being abandoned through indifference, or inconſtancy. Unperceived by ourſelves, pride mixes with our moſt tender affections, and either aggravates or leſſens the ſenſe of every diſappointment, in proportion as we feel ourſelves humbled by the circumſtances that attend it.

The ill-diſguiſed jealouſy, the perſonated calmneſs, the ſtruggling reſentment

reſentment that appeared in this letter, convinced Sophia that Sir Charles was far from being at eaſe, and that to whatever cauſe his preſent unaccountable behaviour was owing, yet ſhe was ſure at leaſt of not being indifferent to him.

It was not difficult to perceive that he had been deceived by ſome malicious reports, and her ſuſpicions fell immediately upon Harriot; but rejecting this thought, as too injurious to her ſiſter, ſhe returned the letter to Mr. Herbert without ſpeaking a word, but with a look much more ſerene and compoſed than before.

Mr. Herbert, who ſaw nothing in this letter like what her penetration had diſcovered, and who conceived it to be only a poor artifice to diſengage himſelf from promiſes which he now repented of,

was ſurpriſed to find her ſo much leſs affected with it than expected, and aſked her what ſhe thought of it?

Sophia told him, that ſhe was fully perſuaded Sir Charles had been prejudiced againſt her.

"Do you think ſo, my dear," ſaid he, after a little pauſe; "then "it is your ſiſter to whom you "are obliged for this kind of-"fice."

"I hope not, ſir," replied Sophia, ſighing; "that circumſtance "would aggravate my concern— "indeed I think it would be a "crime in me to ſuſpect her of "being capable of ſuch unkind-"neſs."

"Well," reſumed Mr. Herbert, "I will, if poſſible, diſcover this "myſtery before night; you ſhall "hear from me to-morrow; in the

"mean

"mean time calm your mind, and "resign yourself entirely to that "Providence, which, while you "continue thus good and virtuous, "will never forsake you."

CHAP. XVI.

Sophia is visited by Mrs. Gibbons, and makes new Discoveries.

MR. Herbert now left her, to go and take leave of the curate and his family; and Sophia, whose fortune had undergone so many revolutions in so short a time, retired to her chamber, where she passed great part of the day alone, at once to indulge her melancholy, and to conceal it from observation.

In the afternoon Dolly came up, in a great hurry of spirits, to acquaint her that Mrs. Gibbons was come to wait upon her; that she had been met at the door by her mother, and that several courtesies had passed between them.

The poor girl, though transport-

ed

ed with joy at this favourable beginning, no ſooner perceived, by the penſive air in Sophia's countenance, and the ſighs that eſcaped her, that her ſuſpicions of ſome new diſappointment having happened to her were true, than inſtantly forgetting the proſperous ſituation of her own affairs, her ſweet face was overſpread with tender grief, and a tear ſtole from her eyes; but Sophia, whom nothing could have awakened from that ſtupifying ſorrow in which any great and ſudden misfortune plunges the mind, but the deſire of being uſeful to her friends, ſoon aſſumed a more chearful look, and haſtened to receive her viſitor.

Mrs. Gibbons was in full dreſs, and had omitted no ſuperfluous ornament that could ſerve to ſhew Sophia how well ſhe underſtood every ſort of punctilio. As ſoon as

the first compliments were over, "You see, madam," said she, "what *effluence* your commands "have over me: I once little "thought that I should ever have "entered this impolished house "again; my nephew attended me "to the door, but I would not "suffer him to come in, because I "am not sure that you are willing "to let these people know the ho- "nour you do him by receiving his "adorations."

Sophia, though a little startled at these words, yet supposed she had no particular meaning in them, and ascribed all to her fantastick manner of expressing herself; but Mrs. Gibbons being resolved to hasten the conclusion of an affair which she had very much at heart, spoke so intelligibly at last, that Sophia could no longer be ignorant of her design, all the ill consequences of

of which ſuddenly ſtriking her imagination, ſhe exclaimed in a tone of ſurpriſe and terror, "Sure I am "the moſt unfortunate creature in "the world! is it poſſible, Mrs. Gibbons, that you can be ſerious? "have you really given any cauſe "for a report, that I receive your "nephew's addreſſes? if you have, "you have done me an irreparable "injury."

Sophia's ſpirits were ſo greatly agited that ſhe did not perceive how much of her ſituation theſe words diſcovered; ſo that Mrs. Gibbons, who ſaw the tears flow faſt from her eyes, immediately comprehended the whole truth.

"I ſee plainly," ſaid ſhe, in great concern, "that I have been "deceived, and others perhaps "have been ſo too; I ſhall never "*diſcapitulate* myſelf for being the "cauſe of any misfortune to your

some more advantageous *treatise* has been on the *tapestry*, and this unluckyaffair has done mischief."

"Give me leave to ask you, madam," interrupted Sophia with some peevishness, "what foundation had you for believing that I considered your nephew as my lover? you know his heart has been long since engaged."

"I acknowledge I have been to blame, my dear miss," returned Mrs. Gibbons, "I was too *sanguinary* in my hopes; but I beg you will *disclaim* no more, this will do no good; only tell me if it is possible to repair the harm I have done by my foolish schemes."

To this Sophia made no answer; but Mrs. Gibbons, who wanted neither tenderness nor candour, and who was greatly concerned at the uneasiness she saw her under, urged her so frequently, and with so much ear-

earneſtneſs, to tell her if ſhe could be of any uſe in clearing up a miſtake that had poſſibly been diſadvantageous to her, that Sophia, ſtill attentive amidſt all her own diſtreſſes to the intereſt of her friend, thought this a favourable opportunity to ſerve her; and therefore told Mrs. Gibbons, that if ſhe was really ſincere in her offers, there was one way.

"I underſtand you, madam," interrupted Mrs. Gibbons, "and I "believe I may venture to ſay that "I thought of this *expedition* be"fore you did. I cannot, indeed, "Miſs Darnley, I cannot conſent "to my nephew's marriage with "the young woman here; you "know I have been affronted."

Sophia now urged ſome arguments in favour of Mrs. Lawſon, but chiefly reſted her defence upon her ignorance of thoſe forms of politeneſs

liteneſs and good breeding which Mrs. Gibbons was ſo perfectly miſtreſs of.

This compliment put the old lady into ſo good a humour, that ſhe cried out, "Well, my dear "Miſs Darnley, in regard to you, "I will take off the *prohibition* I laid "on my nephew to viſit here no "more; and this I hope," added ſhe ſmiling, "will ſet matters right "in another place; as for the reſt, "I ſhall take no reſolution till I "ſee how they behave."

Sophia, in her tranſport at having ſucceeded ſo well with the old lady, felt all her own griefs ſuſpended; and indeed, when ſhe reflected upon what had happened with regard to herſelf, ſhe found ſhe had leſs cauſe for reflection than Mr. Herbert, or her own fears, had ſuggeſted.

Mrs. Gibbons acknowledged that

ſhe

ſhe had flattered herſelf with the hope of her nephew's being well received by her; and that, in conſequence of it, ſhe had talked of their marriage as an event which was very likely to happen, and which would give her great joy. Sophia, being fully perſuaded that theſe reports had reached Sir Charles, though by what means ſhe was not ſo well able to determine, eaſily accounted for that jealouſy and reſentment which had produced ſo ſtrange an inconſiſtency in his behaviour, and which Mr. Herbert conſidered as a piece of artifice to palliate his lightneſs and inconſtancy.

The good old man, animated by his affection for the poor afflicted Sophia, rode with the utmoſt ſpeed to town, and alighted at the houſe of the young baronet. The ſervants informed him, that their maſter was in the country, which

was

was all the intelligence they could give him: for they neither knew where he was, nor when he would return. Mr. Herbert, perplexed and concerned at this new diſappointment, repaired immediately to Mrs. Darnley's, hoping to hear ſome news of him there.

Harriot, in anſwer to his enquiries, told him with an air of triumph, that the ſame day they returned from viſiting Sophia, Sir Charles had waited on her mamma and her, and had as uſual paſt great part of the afternoon with them.

Mr. Herbert, who was ſtruck with this incident, endeavoured to make ſome diſcoveries concerning their converſation, and Harriot's malice made this no difficult matter: for ſhe could not forbear throwing out ſome ſarcaſms againſt her ſiſter, whoſe extreme ſenſibility,

ſhe

ſhe inſinuated, had already found out a new object.

Mr. Herbert, by his artful queſtions, drew her into a confeſſion of all that had paſſed between her and the baronet upon this ſubject; and was convinced that her malignant hints had poiſoned his mind with ſuſpicions unfavourable to Sophia.

He went away full of indignation at her treachery, and ſtill doubtful of Sir Charles's ſincerity, who he could not ſuppoſe would have been ſo eaſily influenced by Harriot's ſuggeſtions, (whoſe envious diſpoſition he well knew,) if his intentions had been abſolutely right.

The next morning he received a letter from Sophia, in which ſhe acquainted him with the diſcoveries ſhe had made; and modeſtly hinted her belief that Sir Charles

had

had been impoſed upon by this report of her intended marriage, which ſhe found was ſpread through the village; and which, as it was very probable, he had intelligence from thence, had confirmed any idle raillery to that purpoſe, which her ſiſter might have indulged herſelf in.

Mr. Herbert reflecting upon all theſe unlucky circumſtances, began to ſuppoſe it poſſible that Sir Charles had been really deceived. He went again to his houſe, but had the mortification to hear from a ſervant whom he had not ſeen the day before, that the baronet was at his ſeat in----

Thither the good old man reſolved to go; the inconveniencies and expence of ſuch a journey, which in his years, and narrow circumſtances were not inconſiderable, had not weight enough with

with him to make him balance a moment whether he ſhould tranſact this affair by letter, or in perſon. The happineſs of his dear and amiable charge depended upon his ſucceſs: he therefore delayed no longer than to make the neceſſary preparations for his journey, and, after writing to Sophia to acquaint her with his deſign, he ſet out for Sir Charles's ſeat, where he met with a new and more ſevere diſappointment. The firſt news he heard was, that the baronet was not in that part of the country; and upon a fuller enquiry of his ſervants, he was informed that their maſter had the morning before ſet out for Dover with an intention to go to Paris.

Mr. Herbert, diſpirited with this news, and fatigued with his fruitleſs journey, retired to his inn, where

where he passed the lonely hours in melancholy reflections upon the capricious behaviour of Sir Charles, and the undeserved distresses of the innocent Sophia.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXIV.

Diſplays certain ſingularities in the character of Sophia, and their effects on the heart of Sir Charles.

SIR Charles, however, notwithſtanding appearances, was at preſent more unhappy than guilty. His reſolution to marry Sophia, though ſuddenly formed, was not the leſs ſincere: he had always loved her with the moſt ardent paſſion, and had not the light character of her mother and ſiſter concurred with thoſe prejudices which his youth, his fortune, and his converſe with the gay world led him into, his heart, which had never ceaſed to do homage to her virtue, would have ſooner ſuggeſted to him the only means of being truly happy.

An

An overſtrained delicacy likewiſe proved another ſource of diſquietude to him. The inequality of their circumſtances gave riſe to a thouſand tormenting doubts: he was afraid, that dazzled with the ſplendor of his fortune, ſhe would ſacrifice her inclinations to her intereſt, and give him her hand without her heart; and when doing juſtice to the greatneſs of her mind, and the real delicacy of her ſentiments, he rejected this ſuppoſition as injurious to her, his buſy imagination conjured up new forms of diſtruſt: he trembled leſt, miſtaking gratitude for love, ſhe ſhould be deceived by her own generoſity and nice ſenſe of obligation, and imagine it was the lover ſhe preferred, when the benefactor only touched her heart.

Such was the perplexed ſtate of his mind, when Mrs. Darnley and

Harriot

Harriot propoſed making her a viſit. With ſome difficulty he conquered his deſire of accompanying them; but his impatience to hear of her, carried him again to Mrs. Darnley's much earlier in the evening than it was likely they would return; preſuming on his intimacy in the family, he ſcrupled not to go up ſtairs, telling the ſervant he would wait till the ladies came home.

He ſat down in the dining-room, where he gazed on Sophia's picture a long time. At laſt a ſudden fancy ſeized him to viſit her apartment, which he knew was on the ſecond floor: he aſcended the ſtairs without being perceived, and with a tender emotion entered the room where his beloved Sophia uſed to paſs ſo many of her retired hours.

It was ſtill elegantly neat, as when its lovely inmate was there; for

Harriot,

Harriot, who hated this room becauſe it contained ſo many monuments of her ſiſter's taſte and induſtry, never went into it; and it remained in the ſame order that ſhe had left it.

The firſt thing that drew the young baronet's attention, was a fire-ſcreen of excellent workmanſhip; it was a flower-piece, and executed with peculiar taſte and propriety: the wainſcot was adorned with ſeveral drawings, neatly framed and glaſſed. In this art Sophia took great delight, having while her farther lived appropriated all her pocket money to the payment of a maſter to inſtruct her in it. Sir Charles conſidered the ſubjects of theſe drawings with a peculiar pleaſure. The delicate pencil of Sophia had here repreſented the Virtues and the Graces, from thoſe lively ideas which exiſted in her own charming mind. Her

Her little library next engaged his notice: many of the books that compoſed it he had preſented her; but he was curious to ſee thoſe which her own choice had directed her to, and in this examination he met with many proofs of her piety as well as of the excellence of her taſte.

Several compoſitions of her own now fell into his hands: he read them with eagerneſs, and, charmed with this diſcovery of thoſe treaſures of wit, which ſhe with modeſt diffidence ſo carefully concealed, he felt his admiration and tenderneſs for her encreaſe every moment.

While he was anxiouſly ſearching for more of her papers, a little ſhagreen caſe fell from one of the ſhelves upon the ground. He took it up, and as every thing that belonged to her excited his curioſity, he opened it immediately, and with

equal ſurpriſe and pleaſure, ſaw his own miniature in water colours, which was evidently the performance of Sophia herſelf.

Had it been poſſible for her to imagine the ſudden and powerful effect the ſight of this picture would have upon the heart of Sir Charles, ſhe would not have ſuffered ſo much uneaſineſs for the loſs of it as ſhe really had; for, forgetting where ſhe had laid it, ſhe ſuppoſed it had dropt out of her pocket, and was apprehenſive of its having fallen into her ſiſter's hands, who ſhe knew would not fail to turn this incident to her diſadvantage.

While Sir Charles gazed upon this artleſs teſtimony of Sophia's affection for him, the ſofteſt gratitude, the tendereſt compaſſion, filled his ſoul. "Oh, my So-
"phia," ſaid he, "do you then
"truly

"truly love me! and have I "cruelly trifled with your tender- "neſs!"

This thought melted him even to tears; he felt in himſelf a deteſtation of thoſe depraved principles which had ſuggeſted to him a deſign of debaſing ſuch purity! he wondered at the hardneſs of his own heart, that could ſo long reſiſt the influence of her gentle virtues, and ſuffer ſuch ſweet ſenſibility to waſte itſelf in anxious doubts, and diſappointed hope.

Being now determined to do juſtice to her merit, and make himſelf happy, his firſt deſign was to go immediately to Mr. Lawſon's; but, reflecting that Sophia had great reaſon to be diſſatisfied with his conduct; and that, to remove her prejudices,

the utmoſt caution and delicacy was to be obſerved, he conceived it would be more proper to make a direct application to Mr. Herbert, whom ſhe loved and reverenced as a father, than to preſent himſelf before her, while her mind yet laboured with thoſe unfavourable ſuſpicions for which he had given but too much cauſe; and hence new fears and doubts aroſe to torment him. He dreaded leſt her juſt reſentment for his injurious deſigns ſhould have weakened thoſe tender impreſſions ſhe had once received; and that, in the pride of offended virtue, every ſofter ſentiment would be loſt.

Impatient of this cruel ſtate of ſuſpenſe and inquietude, he left Sophia's apartment, and repairing to the dining-room, rang the bell for

for the ſervant, of whom he enquired where Mr. Herbert lodged. Having obtained a direction, he went immediately to the houſe; Mr. Herbert was not at home, and Sir Charles, grieved at this diſappointment, and at Mrs. Darnley's not returning that night, from whom he hoped to have heard ſome news of Sophia; the agitation of his mind made him think it an age till the next day, in which he determined to put an end to all his perplexities, and to fix his fate.

After his interview with Mr. Herbert, and the good old man's departure, to prepare Sophia for his intended viſit, the young baronet reſigned his whole ſoul to tenderneſs and joy. His impatience to ſee Sophia encreaſed with his hope of finding her ſenti-

ments for him unchanged, and he regretted a thouſand times his having ſuffered Mr. Herbert to go away without him.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXV.

Lets the reader into ſome circumſtances that help to diſplay Sir Charles's conduct.

MEAN time a card came from Mrs. Darnley and Harriot, acquainting him that they were returned, and thanking him for the uſe of his ſervants and chariot. Sir Charles, eager to hear news of his Sophia, went immediately to wait on them; and ſcarce were the firſt compliments over, when he enquired for her with ſuch apparent emotion, that, Harriot mortified to the laſt degree, reſolved to be even with him, and ſaid every thing that ſhe thought would torment him, and prejudice her ſiſter.

She told him that Sophia was the moſt contented creature in the

world; and that ſhe was ſo charmed with her preſent way of life, and her new companions, that ſhe ſeemed to have forgot all her old friends, and even her relations. "She is grown a meer country "girl," ſaid ſhe, "is always wan-"dering about in the fields and "meadows, followed by a young "ruſtic who has fallen in love with "her. I rallied her a little upon "her taſte; but I found ſhe could "not bear it, and indeed he is ex-"tremely handſome, and ſhe ſays, "has had a genteel education."

Harriot was at once pleaſed and grieved at obſerving the effect theſe inſinuations had on Sir Charles; his colour changed, he trembled, and fixing his eyes on the ground, he remained penſive and ſilent, while Harriot, notwithſtanding her mother's inſignificant frowns, proceeded in a malicious detail of little cir-

cum-

cumſtances partly invented, and partly miſtaken, which fixed the ſharpeſt ſtings of jealouſy in his heart.

If in dealing with cunning perſons we were always to conſider their ends, in order to interpret their ſpeeches, much of their artifice would loſe its effect; but Sir Charles had ſo contemptible an opinion of Harriot's underſtanding, that although he knew ſhe was malicious, he never ſuſpected her of being capable of laying ſchemes to gratify her malice; and did not ſuppoſe ſhe was miſtreſs of invention enough to form ſo plauſible a tale as that ſhe had told.

Impatient under thoſe cruel doubts which now poſſeſſed him, he reſolved to go, late as it was in the evening, to Mr. Lawſon's houſe; and taking an abrupt leave of Mrs. Darnley and her daughter, he went

home, and ordered his horſes to be got ready. He ſcarce knew his own deſign by taking this journey at ſo improper a time; but in the extreme agitation of his mind, the firſt idea of relief that naturally preſented itſelf was to ſee Sophia, who alone could deſtroy or confirm his fears; and this he eagerly purſued without any farther reflection.

The ſervant to whom he had ſent his orders, made no haſte to execute them, as conceiving it to be a moſt extravagant whim in his maſter to ſet out upon a journey ſo late, and in that manner. While he with ſtudied delays protracted the time, hoping for ſome change in his reſolutions, Sir Charles racked with impatience, counted moments for hours; meſſage after meſſage was diſpatched to the groom. The horſes at length were brought, and Sir Charles, with only one ſervant,

galloped

galloped away, never ſtopping till he came to the place where Sophia reſided.

It was now night, and the indecorum of making a viſit at ſuch a time in a family where he was a ſtranger, firſt ſtriking his thoughts, he reſolved to alight at an inn which he ſaw at a ſmall diſtance, and there conſider what it was beſt for him to do.

A gueſt of his appearance ſoon engaged the attention of the hoſt and his wife. They quitted two men with whom they had been talking, and, with a great deal of officious civility, attended upon Sir Charles, who deſired to be ſhewn into a room. As he was following the good woman, who declared he ſhould have the beſt in her houſe, the two perſons before mentioned, bowed to him when he paſſed by

them; the ſalute of the younger having a certain grace in it that drew his attention, he looked back on him, and at the ſight of a very handſome face, and a perſon uncommonly genteel, his heart, by its throbbing emotions, immediately ſuggeſted to him, that this beautiful youth was the lover of his Sophia.

The jealouſy which Harriot's inſinuations had kindled in his heart, now raged with redoubled force; this rival, whom ſhe had called a ruſtic, and whom he fondly hoped to find ſuch, poſſeſſed the moſt attractive graces of form, and probably wanted neither wit nor politeneſs. Sophia's youth, her tenderneſs, her ſenſibility, wounded by his diſſembled indifference, and the cruel capriciouſneſs of his conduct, all diſpoſed her to receive a new impreſ-

impreſſion, and who ſo proper to touch her heart as this lovely youth, whoſe paſſion, as innocent as it was ardent and ſincere, baniſhed all doubt and ſuſpicion, and left her whole ſoul open to the ſoft pleadings of gratitude and love?

While he was wholly abſorbed in theſe tormenting reflections, and incapable of taking any reſolution, the officious landlady entered his chamber to take his orders for ſupper.

Sir Charles, ſurpriſed to find it was ſo late, reſolved to ſtay there all night, and after giving the good woman ſome directions, his reſtleſs curioſity impelled him to aſk her ſeveral queſtions concerning the old man and the youth whom he had ſeen talking to her.

The

The hoſteſs, who was as communicative as he could deſire, told him, that the old man was one farmer Gibbons, of whom ſhe had been buying a load of hay; that the young one was his ſon, and a great ſcholard. "His "aunt, purſued ſhe, breeds him "up to be a gentleman; and "ſhe has a power of money, "and deſigns to leave it all to "him, much good may it do "him, for he is as handſome a "young man as one would deſire "to ſee. Some time ago it was "all over our town that he was go-"ing to be married to the parſon's "youngeſt daughter, and ſhe is a "pretty creature, and *diſarves* him "if he was more richer and hand-"ſomer than he is; but whatever "is the matter, the old folks have "changed their mind, and his

"aunt,

" aunt, they ſay, wants to make up
" a match between him and a fine
" London lady that boards at the
" parſon's; but I'll never believe it
" till I ſee it, for ſhe and the par-
" ſon's daughter are great friends,
" they ſay, and it would not be
" a friendly part to rob the poor
" girl of her ſweetheart. To ſay
" the truth, I believe there is ſome
" juggling among them; but this
" I keep to myſelf, for I would
" not make miſchief; therefore I
" never tell my thoughts to any
" body, but I wiſh the young folks
" well."

Sir Charles, who had liſtened to her with great emotion, diſmiſſed her now, that he might be at liberty to reflect on what he had heard, which, although it did not lead him to a full diſcovery of the truth, yet it ſuggeſted thoughts which relieved him

him in ſome degree from thoſe dreadful pangs of jealouſy with which he had hitherto been tortured, and ballanced at leaſt his fears and his hopes.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXVI.

The Baronet's Jealouſy accounted for: he leaves England.

HIS impatience to free himſelf from this ſtate of perplexity and ſuſpence, allowed him but little repoſe that night; he roſe as ſoon as the day appeared, and it was with ſome difficulty that he prevailed upon himſelf to defer his viſit till a ſeaſonable hour; and then being informed that Mr. Lawſon's houſe was ſcarce a mile diſtant, he left his ſervant and horſes at the inn, and walked thither, amidſt a thouſand anxious thoughts, which made him dread as much as he wiſhed for an interview, which was to decide his fate.

As he drew near the houſe, he perceived a young man ſauntering about

about in an adjacent field, whoſe air and mien had a great reſemblance of the youth whom he had ſeen in the inn. Sir Charles, eager to ſatisfy his doubts, followed him at a diſtance, and the youth turning again his wiſhing eyes towards the houſe, the baronet had a full view of his face.

At the ſight of his young rival his heart throbbed as if it would leave his breaſt: he haſtily retreated behind a hedge, determined to watch his motions; for he imagined, and with reaſon, that he came there to meet his miſtreſs; and who that miſtreſs was, whether Sophia, or the curate's daughter, was the diſtracting doubt, which he now expected to have ſatisfied.

He walked along by the ſide of the hedge, ſtill keeping William in ſight, who ſuddenly turning back, rather flew than ran to meet a woman

man who beckoned to him. Sir Charles ſaw at once his Sophia, and the fatal ſign, which planted a thouſand daggers in his heart. Trembling and pale he leaned againſt a tree, which concealed him from view, and ſaw her advance towards his rival, ſaw her in earneſt diſcourſe with him; and, to compleat his diſtraction and deſpair, ſaw the happy youth throw himſelf at her feet, doubtleſs to thank her for the ſacrifice ſhe made to him of a richer lover.

Such was the inference he drew from this action; and now rage and indignation ſucceeding to grief, in theſe firſt tranſports, he was upon the point of diſcovering himſelf, and ſacrificing the hated youth to his vengeance; but a moment's reflection ſhewed him the diſhonour of a conteſt with ſo deſpicable a rival, and turned all his reſentment againſt

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againſt Sophia, who having quitted her ſuppoſed lover, took her way back again to the houſe. Sir Charles followed her with diſordered haſte, reſolved to load her with reproaches for her inconſtancy: then, unwilling to gratify her pride by ſuch an acknowledgment of his weakneſs, he turned back, curſing love, women, and his own ill fate. In this temper he wandered about a long time; at laſt he again returned to the inn, where, after having given orders to have his horſes got ready, he wrote that letter to Mr. Herbert, in which he ſo well diſguiſed the anguiſh of his heart, that the good old man believed his breaking off the affair was the effect of his lightneſs and inconſtancy only, though Sophia's quicker penetration eaſily diſcovered the latent jealouſy that had dictated it.

Sir Charles ordered his ſervant to deliver

deliver the letter into Mr. Herbert's hands; then mounting his horſe, he bid him follow him as ſoon as he had executed his commiſſion. The young baronet, who retired to his country ſeat to conceal his melancholy, and fondly flattered himſelf that he ſhould ſoon overcome that fatal paſſion which had been the ſource of ſo much diſguſt to him, found his mind ſo cruelly tortured with the remembrance of Sophia, that he reaſſumed his firſt deſign of going abroad, and unfortunately ſet out for Dover the day before Mr. Herbert's arrival.

The good old man being obliged to ſend Sophia this bad news, filled his letter with tender conſolations, and wiſe and prudent couſnels: he exorted her to bear this ſtroke of fortune with that dignity of patience which diſtinguiſhes the good and wiſe.

"The virtue of prosperity, said he, "is temperance, the virtue of adverſity fortitude; it is this laſt "which you are now called upon to "exert, and which the innocence "of your life may well inſpire you "with: for be aſſured, my dear "child, that it is the greateſt conſolation under misfortunes to be "conſcious of having always meant "well, and to be convinced that "nothing but guilt deſerves to be "conſidered as a ſevere evil."

Sophia in her anſwer diſplayed a mind ſtruggling againſt its own tenderneſs, offering up its diſappointed hopes, its griefs, and deſires, in pious ſacrifice to the will of Providence, and ſeeking in religion all its conſolation and ſupport.

"Can a virtuous perſon, ſaid ſhe, "however oppreſſed by poverty, and "in conſequence neglected by the "world, be ſaid to want friends

"and

" and comforters who can look into
" his own mind with modeſt appro-
" bation, and to whom recollection
" furniſhes a ſource of joy? Every
" good action he has performed is a
" friend, every inſtance of pious
" reſignation is a comforter, who
" cheer him with preſent peace, and
" ſupport him with hopes of future
" happineſs. Can he be ſaid to be
" alone, and deprived of the plea-
" ſures of ſociety, who converſes
" with ſaints and angels? is he
" without diſtinction and reward
" whoſe life his almighty Creator
" approves?"

CHAP.

CHAP. XXVII.

Sophia meets with a new Subject of Affliction.

THE loſs of Sir Charles having clouded all Sophia's views of happineſs, ſhe earneſtly intreated Mr. Herbert's permiſſion to ſettle herſelf in that humble ſtation to which Providence ſeemed to call her; and as ſhe believed Mrs. Gibbons might be very uſeful to her upon this occaſion, ſhe reſolved to apply to her as ſoon as ſhe had his anſwer.

Notwithſtanding all her endeavours to bear this ſhock of fate with patience, a fixed melancholy took poſſeſſion of her mind, convinced that Sir Charles had loved her; and that, by an unfortunate concurrence of circumſtances, he had

had been prevented from giving her the utmoſt proof of his affection; her tenderneſs no longer combatted by ſuſpicions to his prejudice, gained new force every day, and all his actions now appeared to her in a favourable point of view: ſo true it is, that when a perſon is found leſs guilty than he is ſuſpected, he is concluded more innocent than he really is.

Mr. Herbert, after a long ſilence, at length acquainted her, that he was ill, and deſired her not to leave Mr. Lawſon's till ſhe heard further from him.

The ſhortneſs of this billet, the trembling hand with which it appeared to be written, filled Sophia with the moſt dreadful apprehenſions. Sir Charles was now forgot, and all her thoughts were taken up with the danger of her worthy friend: ſhe determined to go to

him; and although Mr. Lawſon and his wife endeavoured to diſſuade her from taking ſuch a journey, and William, urged by Dolly, and his own eagerneſs to ſerve her, offered to go and bring her an exact account of the ſtate of his health, yet her purpoſe remained unalterable.

"My dear benefactor is ill," ſaid ſhe, "and has none but "ſtrangers about him; it is fit "that I ſhould go and attend "him; and if I muſt loſe him, purſued ſhe, "burſting into tears, "it will be ſome comfort to me "to reflect that I have done my "duty."

She ſet out early the next morning in the ſtage-coach: Dolly wept at parting, and engaged her lover to attend Sophia to her journey's end; that if Mr. Herbert ſhould be worſe than they apprehended,

hended, he might be near to assist and comfort her.

Sophia, when she saw him riding by the side of the coach, attempted to persuade him to return; but William charmed to have an opportunity of expressing his zeal for her service, would not quit her; and her spirits being too weak to contest this point with him, she was obliged to suffer his attendance.

They reached the place where Mr. Herbert was, in the evening of the third day: he had taken lodgings at the house of a farmer, where he was attended with great tenderness and care.

Sophia appeared with so deep a concern upon her countenance, and enquired for him with such extreme emotion, that the good woman of the house concluding

ſhe was his daughter, thought it neceſſary before ſhe anſwered her queſtions, to preach patience and ſubmiſſion to her, wiſely obſerving, that we are all mortal, and that death ſpares nobody, from the ſquire to the ploughman.

She ran on in this manner till ſhe perceived Sophia grow pale, and cloſe her eyes: ſhe had juſt time to prevent her from falling, and with William's aſſiſtance, placed her in a chair, where while ſhe applied remedies to recover her from her ſwoon, the youth with tears in his eyes, aſked her ſoftly, how long Mr. Herbert had been dead.

"Dead!" repeated the farmer's wife, "who told you he was "dead? no, no, it is not ſo bad "as that neither."

William

William rejoiced to hear this, and as ſoon as Sophia ſhewed ſome ſigns of returning life, he greeted her with the welcome news. She caſt a look full of doubt and anguiſh upon the countrywoman, who confirmed his report, and offered to go with her to the gentleman's room. Sophia inſtantly found her ſtrength return; ſhe followed her with trembling haſte; and, leſt her preſence ſhould ſurpriſe Mr. Herbert, ſhe directed the good woman to tell him, that a friend of his was come to ſee him.

She heard him anſwer in a weak voice, but with ſome emotion, "It is my dear child, bring "her to me."

Sophia immediately appeared, and throwing herſelf upon her

knees at his bed-ſide, burſt into tears, and was unable to ſpeak.

The good old man holding one of her hands preſt in his, tenderly blamed her for the trouble ſhe had given herſelf in coming ſo far to viſit him; but acknowledged at the ſame time, that this inſtance of her affection was extremely dear to him, and that her preſence gave him inexpreſſible comfort.

Sophia entered immediately upon the office of a nurſe to her benefactor, and performed all the duties of the moſt affectionate child to the beſt of parents.

Mr. Herbert employed the little remaining ſtrength he had in endeavours to comfort her, and in pious exhortations. "Weep not "for me, my dear child," would he ſay, "but rather rejoice that "the

" the innocence of my life has
" diveſted death of his terrors,
" and enabled me to meet him
" with calm reſignation, and with
" humble hope. At this awful
" hour, how little would it a-
" vail me, that I had been rich,
" that I had been great and
" powerful? but what comforts
" do I not feel from an unre-
" proving conſcience? theſe com-
" forts every one has it in his
" power to procure: live virtuous
" then, my dear Sophia, that you
" may die in peace: how ſmall
" is the difference between the
" longeſt and the ſhorteſt life!
" if its pleaſures be few, its mi-
" ries are ſo likewiſe; how little
" do they enjoy whom the world
" calls happy! how little do they
" ſuffer whom it pronounces
" wretched! one point of fleeting

" time paſt, and death reduces all
" to an equality. But the diſtinc-
" tion between virtue and vice,
" and future happineſs and miſery
" are eternal."

CHAP. XXVIII.

The Character of Mrs. Howard.

SOPHIA had need of all the conſolation ſhe derived from her reflections on the virtue and piety of her friend, to enable her to bear the apprehenſions of his approaching death with any degree of fortitude; but when ſhe leaſt expected it, his diſtemper took a favourable turn, and in a few days the moſt dangerous ſymptons were removed.

The Bath waters being judged abſolutely neceſſary for the entire re-eſtabliſhment of his health, he reſolved to go thither as ſoon as he had recovered ſtrength enough to bear the journey.

Sophia at his earneſt deſire conſented to return to Mr. Lawſon's,

and remain there till he came from Bath, but ſhe would not quit him till he was able to take this journey; and by the ſweetneſs of her converſation, her tender aſſiduity, and watchful care, contributed ſo much towards his recovery, that he was ſoon in a condition to travel with ſafety.

He accompanied her the firſt day's journey to Mr. Lawſon's; and being met at the inn by this worthy friend and young William, he conſigned his beloved charge to their care, and purſued his way to Bath.

Sophia was received with great joy by Mrs. Lawſon and her daughters: Dolly hung a long time upon her neck in tranſports, and as ſoon as they were alone, informed her that Mrs. Gibbons and her mother were perfectly reconciled; that ſhe had conſented to her nephew's mar-

marriage, and even shewed an impatience to conclude it: "but I "prevailed," said she, "to have "the ceremony delayed till you, "my dear friend, could be pre-"sent; for I could not think of "being happy, while you to whom "I owe all, was afflicted."

Sophia embraced her tenderly, congratulated her upon her change of fortune, and gave many praises to her lover, to whom she acknowledged great obligations for his care and attention to her.

Dolly's cheeks glowed with pleasure while she heard her William commended by one whom she so much loved and revered.

The young lovers were married a few days afterwards; and Sophia, who had so earnestly endeavoured to bring about this union, and had suffered so much in her own interest by her solicitude concerning it, was

one of those to whom it gave the most satisfaction.

Mean time Mr. Herbert continued indisposed at Bath, and Sophia uneasy, lest in this increase of his expences, her residence at Mr. Lawson's should lay him under some difficulties, resolved to ease him as soon as possible of the charge of her maintenance: she explained her situation to Mrs. Gibbons, and requested her assistance in procuring her a place.

Mrs. Gibbons expressed great tenderness and concern for her upon this occasion, and assured her she would employ all her interest in her service. She accordingly mentioned her with great praise to a widow lady of a very affluent fortune, who had established such a character for generosity and goodness, that she hoped, if she could be induced to take Sophia under her

her protection her fortune would be made.

Mrs. Howard, ſo was the Lady called, no ſooner heard that a young woman of merit, well born, and genteely educated was reduced to go to ſervice for ſubſiſtence, than ſhe exclaimed with great vehemence againſt the avarice and luxury of the rich and great, who either hoarded for their unthankful heirs, or laviſhed in expenſive pleaſures, thoſe ſuperfluous ſums which ought to be applied to the relief of the indigent. "Oh that I had a for-"tune," cried ſhe, "as large as "my heart, there ſhould not be "one diſtreſſed perſon in the "world! I muſt ſee this young "lady Mrs. Gibbons, and I muſt "do ſomething for her. You "have obliged me infinitely by "putting it in my power to gra-"tify the unbounded benevolence

"of

"of my heart upon a deſerving "object."

Mrs. Gibbons, when ſhe related this converſation to Sophia, filled her with an extreme impatience to ſee the lady, not from any mean conſiderations of advantage to herſelf, but admiration of ſo excellent a character. She accompanied Mrs. Gibbons in a viſit to her at her country ſeat, which was but a few miles diſtant from the village where they lived; and Mrs. Howard was ſo pleaſed with her at this firſt interview, that ſhe gave her an invitation to ſpend the remainder of the ſummer with her, and this in ſo obliging a manner, that Sophia immediately complied, not thinking it neceſſary to wait till ſhe had conſulted Mr. Herbert upon this offer, as ſhe was fully perſuaded he could have no objections to her accepting it, Mrs.

Mrs. Howard being ſo conſiderable by her family and fortune, and ſo eſtimable by her character.

This lady, who had made an early diſcovery of Sophia's economical talents, ſet her to work immediately after her arrival; her taſk was to embroider a white ſattin negligee, which ſhe undertook with great readineſs, pleaſed at having an opportunity of obliging a woman of ſo generous a diſpoſition, and in ſome degree to requite her for her hoſpitality.

Mrs. Howard indeed always prevented thoſe on whom ſhe conferred favours, from incurring the guilt of ingratitude; for ſhe took care to be fully repaid for any act of benevolence; and having a wonderful art in extracting advantage to herſelf from the neceſſities of others, ſhe ſometimes ſought out the unfortunate with a ſolicitude that did great

ho-

honour to her charity, which was ſure to be its own reward. A few oſtentatious benefactions had ſufficiently eſtabliſhed her character; and while her name appeared among the ſubſcribers to ſome faſhionable charity, who could ſuſpect that her table was ſerved with a parſimony which would have diſgraced a much ſmaller fortune; that her rents from her indigent tenants were exacted with the moſt unrelenting rigor, and the naked and hungry ſent ſighing from her gate?

It has been well obſerved that what is called liberality is often no more than the vanity of giving, of which ſome perſons are fonder than of what they give. But the vanity of giving publicly is moſt prevailing; and hence it happens, that thoſe who are moſt celebrated for their charity, are in reality leaſt ſenſible to the feelings of humanity: and

the

the ſame perſons from whom the moſt affecting repreſentation of private diſtreſs could not force the leaſt relief, have been among the firſt to ſend their contributions to any new foundation.

Sophia knew not how to reconcile many circumſtances in Mrs. Howard's conduct with her general profeſſions of benevolence and generoſity; but that lady had been ſo uſed to diſguiſe herſelf to others; that at laſt ſhe did not know herſelf; and the warmth and vehemence with which ſhe delivered her ſentiments impoſed almoſt as much upon herſelf as her hearers.

Sophia's amiable qualities however ſoon produced their uſual effects, and inſpired Mrs. Howard with as much friendſhip for her as ſo intereſted a temper was capable of. She wiſhed to ſee her fortune eſtabliſhed, and was very deſirous of

ſerv-

ſerving her as far as ſhe could, conſiſtent with her prudent maxims which were to make other perſons the ſource of thoſe benefits, the merit of which ſhe arrogated to herſelf.

Chance ſoon furniſhed her with an opportunity of exerting her talents in favour of Sophia, and of engaging, as ſhe conceived, her eternal gratitude. A country lady of her acquaintance coming one day to viſit her, with her ſon, a clowniſh ignorant youth, Mrs. Howard was encouraged by the frequent glances he gave Sophia, to form a ſcheme for marrying her to him; and in this ſhe foreſaw ſo many poſſible advantages to herſelf from Sophia's grateful diſpoſition, that ſhe purſued it with the moſt anxious ſolicitude.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXIX.

Mrs. Howard is taken in her own ſnare.

MR. Barton, ſo was the young ſquire called, having conceived a liking for Sophia, repeated his viſits frequently, emboldened by Mrs. Howard's civilities, who took every occaſion of praiſing Sophia, and inſinuating that he would be extremely happy in ſuch a wife.

She ſometimes left him alone with Sophia, in hopes that he would declare his paſſion to her: but the ruſtic, awed by the dignity of her perſon and manners, durſt not even raiſe his eyes to look on her; ſo that Mrs. Howard, finding the affair did not advance ſo faſt as ſhe wiſhed, rallied Sophia upon her ill-timed reſerve, and hinted her views

views in her favour, which ſhe conſidering as an effect of her friendſhip, liſtened with reſpect, and even gratitude, though her heart refuſed to concur in them.

This converſation paſſed in the preſence of Mrs. Howard's only ſon, a youth about nineteen, who had come from the univerſity to paſs a few days with his mother. As ſoon as ſhe quitted Sophia, he approached her, and, with a look of tenderneſs and concern, told her, "He "was ſorry to find his mother ſo "zealous an advocate for Mr. Bar-"ton, who could not poſſibly de-"ſerve her."

"Nor can I poſſibly deſerve him," replied Sophia with a ſmile; "he "is too rich."

"Love only and merit can de-"ſerve you," reſumed the young ſtudent, ſighing, "and if love were "merit,

" merit, I know one who might
" ——hope——"

He paused and hesitated, and Sophia, to whom the language of love in any mouth but Sir Charles's was odious, suddenly quitted him, to avoid the continuance of a discourse which she considered as mere unmeaning gallantry.

Mean time, her rustic lover not having courage enough to declare his passion to her, had recourse to the indulgence of his mother, who till that time had never refused any of his desires.

He told her that he never liked any young woman so well in his life as Mrs. Sophia Darnley; and that he was sure she would make a good wife, because Mrs. Howard had told him so, and encouraged him to break his mind to her, but he was ashamed: he declared he would

would marry no body elſe, and begged his mother to get her for him.

Mrs. Barton, full of rage againſt her neighbour, for thus endeavouring to enſnare her ſon into a marriage, as ſhe conceived unworthy of him, reſolved to go to her, and load her with reproaches. While her chariot was getting ready, ſhe continued to queſtion her ſon, and heard a great many particulars from him, which convinced her that his affections were more deeply engaged than ſhe had imagined.

After ordering the young ſquire to be locked up till her return, ſhe flew to Mrs. Howard, and, with the moſt violent tranſports of rage, upbraided her with the treacherous part ſhe had acted, by ſeducing her ſon into a liking for a poor creature, who was a dependent upon her

her charity, and whom ſhe took this method to get rid of.

Mrs. Howard, who held Mrs. Barton in great contempt, on account of her ignorance, and valued herſelf extremely upon her philoſophic command over her paſſions, liſtened with an affected calmneſs to all Mrs. Barton's invectives; and when ſhe found ſhe had railed herſelf out of breath, ſhe began to declaim in a ſolemn accent againſt avarice, and that vile ſordid diſpoſition of parents, who, in the marriage of their children, preferred the droſs of riches to the real treaſures of wiſdom and virtue. She very charitably lamented Mrs. Barton's want of diſcernment, and littleneſs of mind; and concluded that Miſs Sophia's merit rendered her deſerving of a huſband even more conſiderable than Mr. Barton.

" Then

"Then marry her to your own "ſon," replied Mrs. Barton, with a ſneer; "no doubt but he will be "more worthy of her."

"If my ſon ſhould declare a paſ- "ſion for Miſs Sophia," reſumed Mrs. Howard, "it would ſoon be "ſeen how far my ſentiments are "exalted above yours."

"I am glad to hear this," returned Mrs. Barton, "for I am "very ſure Mr. Howard is in love "with this wonderful creature "whom you praiſe ſo much; and "ſince you are ſo willing to make "her your daughter-in-law, I ſhall "be under no fear of my ſon's "marrying her."

Mrs. Howard, at this unexpected ſtroke, turned as pale as death, and, with a faultering voice, aſked her, "What reaſon ſhe had for ſup- "poſing her ſon was in love with "Miſs Sophia?"

Mrs.

Mrs. Barton, who enjoyed her perplexity and confuſion, ſuffered her to repeat her queſtions ſeveral times, and then maliciouſly referred her to the young gentleman himſelf, "Who," ſaid ſhe, "upon "finding you ſo favourably diſ- "poſed, will, I doubt not, be "ready enough to own his inclina- "tions."

Mrs. Howard was now ſo far humbled, that ſhe condeſcended to to intreat Mrs. Barton to tell her what ſhe knew of this affair.

"All my information," ſaid Mrs. Barton, "comes from my ſon, to "whom Mr. Howard, conſidering "him as his rival, declared his "better right to the lady, as hav- "ing firſt acquainted her with his "paſſion."

At this intelligence Mrs. Howard's rage got ſo much the better of her prudence, that ſhe uttered a

thouſand invectives againſt the innocent Sophia, which drew ſome ſevere ſarcaſms from Mrs. Barton who being now fully revenged, roſe up to be gone; but Mrs. Howard, ſenſible that a quarrel upon this occaſion might have conſequences very unfavourable to her reputation, ſeized her hand, and led her half reluctant, again to her chair, where after ſhe had ſoothed her into good humour, by ſome flattering expreſſions, which coming from one of her acknowledged underſtanding, had great weight. She told her with the moſt unbluſhing confidence, that ſhe was now convinced ſhe had been deceived in the character of the young woman on whom ſhe had with her uſual generoſity conferred ſo many benefits. "I find to my inexpreſſible con-"cern," purſued ſhe, "that this "modeſt, ſenſible, and virtuous young

"crea-

"creature, as I once believed her, is "in reality an artful hypocrite, "whose only aim is to make her "fortune, by enſnaring ſome unex-"perienced youth into a marriage. "Let us join our endeavours then, "my dear Mrs. Barton, to preſerve "our ſons from this danger: this "is a common cauſe, all mothers "are concerned in it; we will "ſhew the young diſſembler in her "proper colours, and prevent her "impoſing upon others as ſhe has "done upon us."

Mrs. Barton, who never carried her reflections very far, was ſo well pleaſed with Mrs. Howard's preſent behaviour, that ſhe forgot all the paſt: theſe two ladies became on a ſudden the beſt friends in the world, and this union was to be cemented with the ruin of Sophia's fame, ſuch beginnings have certain female

friendſhips, and ſuch are the leagues in which the wicked join.

Mrs. Barton propoſed to have her ſent for into their preſence, and after reproaching her ſeverely, diſmiſs her with contempt; but the more politic Mrs. Howard, whoſe views were at once to deſtroy Sophia's reputation, and to ſecure her own, diſapproved of this harſh treatment, as ſhe called it, and charitably reſolved to ruin her with all poſſible gentleneſs.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXX.

Sophia leaves Mrs. Howard.

MRS. Howard accordingly wrote to Mrs. Gibbons, and acquainted her, that having diſcovered an intrigue carrying on between Sophia and her ſon, ſhe thought it neceſſary to diſmiſs her immediately out of her family; but that the poor young creature might be expoſed as little as poſſible to cenſure, ſhe begged ſhe would come herſelf to fetch her away, and deliver her to her friends, with a caution to watch her conduct carefully.

She recommended ſecrecy to her for Sophia's ſake; and aſſured her that if it had not been for this diſcovery of her bad conduct, ſhe had reſolved to have provided for her handſomely.

Mrs. Gibbons, whom this letter threw into the utmoſt aſtoniſhment, immediately communicated the contents of it to Dolly and William, with whom ſhe now lived.

Dolly burſt into tears of grief and indignation, and earneſtly intreated her to go immediately and take Miſs Sophia out of a houſe where her merit was ſo little underſtood: but William, who looked farther into the conſequences of this affair than either his wife or his aunt, believed it neceſſary for the juſtification of Sophia's honour, that Mr. Lawſon ſhould wait upon Mrs. Howard, and demand an explanation of thoſe cenſures which ſhe had caſt upon a young lady confided to his care; rightly judging, that if malice was the ſource of her accuſation, ſhe would not dare to purſue it with a man of his character; and if it aroſe from the infor-

mation

mation of others, he would be able to detect the falſhood of it.

Theſe reaſons prevailed with Mrs. Gibbons, who had been very deſirous to ſhew her eloquence upon this occaſion, and was reſolved, ſhe ſaid, not to have ſpared Mrs. Howard for her *immature* concluſions.

William went immediately to his father-in-law, and acquainted him with what had happened. Mr. Lawſon was grieved from the conſideration of what Sophia's delicate ſenſibility would feel from ſuch an attack upon her reputation; and this was the worſt that he apprehended could happen from calumnies which the purity of her manners and the innocency of her life would be always a ſufficient refutation of. A wiſe and virtuous perſon, he knew, was out of the reach of fortune, though not free from the malice of it.

All attempts againſt ſuch a one are, as the poet ſays, like the arrows of Xerxes; they may darken the day, but cannot ſtifle the ſun.

His impatience to take Sophia out of the hands of a woman whom he conceived to be either very malicious, or very imprudent, made him defer his viſit no longer than till the afternoon.

When he ſent in his name, Mrs. Howard, who had no ſuſpicion of the occaſion of his coming, ordered him to be ſhewn into a parlour, where ſhe ſuffered him to wait near an hour before ſhe admitted him to her preſence; a country curate being in her opinion a perſon too inſignificant to lay claim to any degree of conſideration, and beſides, this ſort of neglect being affected by many perſons of quality, to whom it certainly gives great importance and dignity, their

their imitators never loſe any opportunity of exerciſing it.

Mr. Lawſon was at laſt ſummoned to the lady's dreſſing-room, where he expected to have found Sophia, but was glad to ſee Mrs. Howard alone. She aſked him with a little ſuperciliouſneſs, if he had any buſineſs with her; to which he replied, with a ſolemnity in his look and accent that ſurpriſed her, "That being a friend to miſs So-"phia Darnley, and the perſon to "whoſe care ſhe was confided by "her relations, he thought it his "duty to enquire what part of her "conduct had given occaſion for "thoſe unfavourable ſuſpicions "which were entertained of her."

"Mrs. Gibbons, madam," purſued he, "has communicated to "me a letter which ſhe has receiv-"ed from you, wherein there is a "heavy charge againſt miſs Sophia;

" a charge which none who know
" her can think it poſſible for her
" to deſerve. There muſt cer-
" tainly be ſome miſtake here, ma-
" dam; you have been miſinform-
" ed, or appearances have deceived
" you, and in juſtice to you, as
" well as to one of the moſt vir-
" tuous and amiable young women
" in the world, I am reſolved to
" trace the ſource of theſe calum-
" nies, that her innocence may be
" fully cleared. I beg of you then,
" madam, let me know what
" foundation you have for believ-
" ing that Miſs Sophia---"

Mrs. Howard, whom this ſpeech had thrown into great confuſion, interrupted him here, to prevent his repeating thoſe expreſſions in her letter, the meaning of which, though obvious, ſhe durſt not avow.

" I find," ſaid ſhe, " that you
" and Mrs. Gibbons have ſeen this

"affair in a worſe light than I in-
"tended you ſhould; my ſon has
"been fooliſh enough to entertain
"a liking for this girl, whom I
"took under my protection, with
"a view to provide for her hand-
"ſomely, and ſhe has been wiſe
"enough," purſued ſhe, with an ironical ſmile, "to give him en-
"couragement, I ſuppoſe; but with
"all her excellencies, I am not
"diſpoſed to make her my daugh-
"ter-in-law."

Mrs. Howard threw in this laſt ſoftening expreſſion, in hopes it would ſatisfy Mr. Lawſon, and added, "that to prevent any thing
"happening, which might be diſ-
"agreeable to her, ſhe begged he
"would take Sophia home with
"him."

"Moſt willingly, madam," ſaid he; "but ſince it ſeems to be your
"opinion, that this young gentle-

"woman has encouraged the clan-
"deſtine addreſſes of your ſon, I
"think it will be proper to exa-
"mine firſt into the truth of theſe
"ſuſpicions, that you may not part
"with worſe thoughts of her than
"ſhe deſerves."

Mrs. Howard being thus preſt, and unwilling to enter into an explanation that would expoſe all her artifices, was forced to acknowledge that ſhe had no other foundation for her fears than the paſſion her ſon had owned for her; and having made this unwilling conceſſion, ſhe left him with a countenance inflamed with ſtifled rage, ſaying ſhe would ſend Sophia to him.

Accordingly ſhe went into the room where ſhe was at work, and told her, her friend the curate was waiting to carry her home. Obſerving

ſerving her to look extremely ſurpriſed, "If you conſider," ſaid ſhe, "what returns you have made me "for the benefits I have conferred "upon you, you will not think it "ſtrange that we ſhould part in this "manner."

"Bleſs me," cried Sophia, "what "have I done to deſerve ſuch re-"proaches?"

"I cannot ſtay to talk to you "now," ſaid Mrs. Howard; "I "have explained myſelf to Mr. "Lawſon; I am ſorry to ſay, that "I now can only wiſh you "well."

She hurried out of the room when ſhe had ſaid this; and Sophia, in the utmoſt perplexity and concern, flew down ſtairs to Mr. Lawſon, who was already at the gate waiting to help her into the chaiſe: ſhe gave him her hand, aſking

ing him at the ſame time, with great emotion, "What Mrs. "Howard accuſed her of?"

As ſoon as they drove away, Mr. Lawſon related all that had paſt between that lady and him, which filled Sophia with new aſtoniſhment: ſhe could not comprehend Mrs. Howard's motives for acting in the manner ſhe had done with regard to her; all her conduct appeared to her highly extravagant and inconſiſtent; ſhe aſked Mr. Lawſon a thouſand queſtions, full of that ſimplicity which ever accompanies real goodneſs of heart.

He gave her ſome notion of the dangerous character of Mrs. Howard, and greatly blamed her for having ſo ſuddenly accepted her invitation, without firſt conſulting Mr. Herbert. "It is a maxim, purſued he, "of one of the wiſeſt

"of

"of the antients, that in form-
"ing new connections of every
"ſort, it is of great importance
"in what manner the firſt ap-
"proaches are made, and by whoſe
"hands the avenues of friendſhip
"are laid open."

Mr. Lawſon, by this hint, gave Sophia to underſtand, that he did not think Mrs. Gibbons a proper perſon to introduce her into the world. She was now ſenſible that ſhe had been too precipitate; but her motives were ſo generous, that Mr. Herbert, whom in a letter ſhe acquainted with the whole affair, eaſily juſtified her in his own opinion, though he earneſtly recommended it to her not to let her apprehenſions of being burthenſome to him draw her into new inconveniencies.

Mr. Lawſon having, as he imagined, prevented Mrs. Howard

from making any future attack upon Sophia's reputation, by obliging her to acknowledge her innocence, was ſurpriſed to hear wherever he went, of the calumnies ſhe invented againſt her.

Nothing is more common than for perſons to hate with extreme inveteracy thoſe whom they have injured; and although Mrs. Howard was convinced, that Sophia would not admit a viſit from her ſon, (who now openly avowed his paſſion for her;) that ſhe refuſed to receive his letters, and ſhunned every place where ſhe thought it poſſible to meet him; yet pretending to be apprehenſive that the youth would be drawn into a clandeſtine marriage, ſhe ſent him away precipitately upon his travels, and this gave a colour to new invectives againſt Sophia, who truſting only to her innocence for her juſtification,

had

had the satisfaction to find that innocence fully acknowledged in the esteem and respect with which she was treated by all the persons of fashion in the neighbourhood.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXI.

Sophia returns to Town, and hears news that reduces her to Deſpair.

MR. Herbert, who in every new trial to which Sophia was expoſed, found greater cauſe for admiration of her character, praiſed the gentleneſs and forgiving ſpirit which ſhe diſcovered upon this occaſion; but Mrs. Gibbons was not wholly ſatisfied with her conduct, "You "ought to *diſcriminate* upon Mrs. "Howard, ſaid ſhe, and tell the "world how deſirous ſhe was to "have you married to her friend's "ſon, though ſhe makes ſuch a "clutter about her own: indeed "you want ſpirit, miſs Sophia," added the old lady, with a little contempt.

"I am not of your opinion, ma-
"dam, replied Sophia; for in taking
"revenge upon our enemies, we are
"only even with them; in paſſing
"over their malice we are ſuperior."

"Well, well, interrupted Mrs.
"Gibbons, I have no notion of ſuch
"*ſuperiouſneſs*: I always reſent in-
"juries, and Mrs. Howard ſhall
"feel my reſentment for her malice
"to you. I have not returned her
"laſt viſit yet, and perhaps I may
"not this month; this is pretty
"ſevere I think."

Sophia, compoſing her counte-
nance as well as ſhe could, thanked
Mrs. Gibbons for this inſtance of
her friendſhip to her; but ſhe had
no opportunity to obſerve whether
ſhe kept her word, for ſhe was ſum-
moned to town by a letter from her
mother, which gave her a melan-
choly account of her affairs.

Mrs. Darnley acquainted her that
the

the gentleman who paid her the annuity which Sir Charles had ſtipulated for her when he procured him her late huſband's place, was dead. She deſired her to come immediately to town to aſſiſt her under her miſfortunes; and added in a poſtſcript, as if reluctantly, that Harriot had left her, and was not ſo dutiful as ſhe could wiſh.

Sophia read this letter with tears; and, impatient to comfort her afflicted mother, ſhe inſtantly prepared for her little journey.

All Mr. Lawſon's family parted from her with great regret; but Dolly's affliction was extreme, and Sophia amidſt ſo many greater cauſes of ſorrow, felt a new pang when ſhe took leave of her tender and innocent friend.

To ſpare Mr. Lawſon the trouble of conducting her to town, ſhe accepted a place in the coach of a la-

dy

dy with whom ſhe had lately become acquainted, and who profeſſed a particular eſteem for her.

On her arrival at her mother's houſe, ſhe found only a ſervant there, who informed her that her miſtreſs had taken lodgings at Kenſington for the air, having been indiſpoſed for ſome weeks paſt.

Sophia ordered her to get a hackney coach to the door, and was hurrying away without daring to enquire for her ſiſter, when the maid told her miſs Darnley deſired to ſee her before ſhe went to Kenſington.

"Where is my ſiſter," ſaid Sophia, with a faultering accent.

The anſwer ſhe received was a ſtroke of fortune more cruel than any ſhe had yet experienced: her ſiſter, ſhe found, lived in the houſe which Sir Charles had once offered to her.

Trem-

Trembling and pale she ordered the coachman to drive thither, and drawing up the windows, relieved her labouring heart with a shower of tears.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXII.

Which leaves Sophia in her former Perplexity.

THE firſt thought that ſtruck the amazed Sophia was, that Sir Charles, either following the motions of his natural inconſtancy, or in revenge of her ſuppoſed contempt of him, had married Harriot. Certain that ſhe had now loſt for ever this lover, who with all his real or imputed faults, ſhe had never been able to baniſh from her heart, ſhe reſigned herſelf up to the ſharpeſt agonies of deſpair, and had already arrived at her ſiſter's houſe before ſhe was able to ſtop the courſe of her tears.

A ſervant in the livery of her own family opened the door. This circumſtance

cumſtance ſurpriſed Sophia, who pulling her hat over her eyes to conceal her diſorder, aſked him, with ſome heſitation, if his miſtreſs was at home.

The fellow replied, he believed ſhe was, and opening the coach-door, ſhewed her into a parlour, telling her, with a ſmart air, that he would enquire of his lady's woman whether ſhe was viſible yet or no.

Sophia having ſummoned all her fortitude to enable her to go through this ſevere trial with dignity, had time enough to recollect and compoſe herſelf before any one appeared; and now ſeveral circumſtances ruſhed upon her memory which, in the firſt tranſports of her aſtoniſhment and grief, had eſcaped her attention. Mrs. Darnley, in her letter, had not mentioned Harriot's marriage, but barely ſaid ſhe had left her. The

ſervant

ſervant who delivered her meſſage called her miſs Darnley; and though ſhe lived in a houſe that belonged to Sir Charles, yet it was ſcarcely ſuitable to the quality of his wife.

A few moments reflection upon theſe appearances made the generous Sophia change the object of her concern. The misfortune for which ſhe had grieved ſo much, ſeemed light, compared with that ſhe apprehended: ſhe wept no longer for the inconſtancy of her lover; ſhe trembled for the honour of her ſiſter; and her greateſt fear now was, that Sir Charles was not married.

While ſhe was abſorbed in theſe melancholy thoughts, Harriot's maid entered the room, who after glancing over Sophia with a ſupercilious eye, (for ſhe was very ſimply dreſt,) aſked her, "If ſhe had any buſineſs "with her lady."

"Tell her, replied Sophia, that "her ſiſter is here."

The girl blushed, courtesied, and flew to acquaint her mistress; and Sophia was instantly desired to walk up stairs.

She found Harriot in her dressing room, in an elegant dishabille, having just finished her morning's work, which appeared in a suit of ribbons made up with great taste.

As soon as she saw Sophia, she rose from her chair, and saluted her with affected dignity; but at the same time with an air of embarrassment that encreased every moment: so that being unable to bear the sweet but penetrating looks of her sister, she resumed her work, altering and unripping, without any apparent design, yet affecting to be extremely busy, and to shew how perfectly she was at ease, talked of the most trifling matters imaginable, while Sophia gazed on her in silent anguish, anxious to know the truth

of

of her ſituation, yet dreading to have it explained. At length ſhe told her that ſhe was going to Kenſington to her mother, and deſired to know if ſhe had any meſſage to ſend to her.

Harriot ſuddenly interrupting her, as if ſhe feared ſome further queſtions, began to exclaim againſt her mother's unreaſonable temper, ſaying, that ſhe had offended her violently only becauſe ſhe had it not in her power to comply with ſome very extravagant expectations which ſhe had formed.

"Siſter, ſaid Sophia, I am wholly "ignorant of your affairs; I know "not what cauſe of diſcontent you "have given my mother, but I ſee "there is a great alteration in your "condition of life, and I hope----"

"What do you hope, pray Miſs? "interrupted Harriot, reddening: I "ſuppoſe I am to have ſome of your

" ſatirical flings; your temper is " not altered I find."

" Dear Harriot," reſumed Sophia, with tears in her eyes (this cauſeleſs anger confirming her ſuſpicions) " why do you reproach me with be- " ing ſatirical? is it a crime to be " anxious for your happineſs?"

" I wiſh you would not trouble " yourſelf about me, replied Harri- " ot, I know beſt what will make " me happy; you ſhould not pre- " tend to inſtruct your elders, miſs " Sophy; I am older than you; " you know, you have often up- " braided me with that."

" Siſter, ſaid Sophia calmly, you " deſired to ſee me, have you any " thing to ſay to me?"

" I know, anſwered Harriot, " that I ſhall meet with ungrateful " returns for my kindneſs; never- " theleſs I ſhall act like a ſiſter to- " wards you, and it was to tell you

ſo

" ſo that I wiſhed to ſee you: I
" very much doubt whether, if you
" were in proſperity, you would do
" the ſame by me."

" Have I behaved ſo ill in adver-
" ſity then, ſaid Sophia, that you
" form this hard judgment of
" me, Harriot?"

" Pray don't upbraid me with
" your behaviour, miſs, ſaid Har-
" riot; other people may have be-
" haved as well as you, though they
" are not prudes."

" You ſay you are in proſperity,
" ſiſter, ſaid Sophia, but perhaps
" you and I have different notions
" of proſperity: let me know the
" truth of your ſituation, and if I
" find you happy according to my
" notions of happineſs, you will
" ſoon be convinced that I can take
" a ſiſter's ſhare in it."

" I am not obliged to give an
" account of my conduct to you,

replied Harriot, who had liſtened to this ſpeech with great emotion; "and I muſt tell you, ſiſter "Sophia, that if you go on taking "this liberty of queſtioning and "cenſuring me, I ſhall not care "how ſeldom I ſee you. As to my "mother, I know that it is my du-"ty to do every thing for her that "is in my power; and this I have "offered to do already."

Saying this, ſhe rang the bell, and her maid appearing, ſhe gave her ſome orders which neceſſarily required her attendance in the room; ſo that Sophia, finding ſhe could have no further diſcourſe with her ſiſter, roſe up and took leave of her with an aching heart. Her griefs all aggravated by the apprehenſion of her ſiſter's diſhonour, and the hatred which ſhe felt for Sir Charles, as her ſeducer, ſtruggling with a tender remembrance, her gentle boſom

was

was torn with conflicting paſſions, and ſhe proved but too well the truth of that maxim, That philoſophy eaſily triumphs over paſt and future evils, but the *preſent* triumph over her.

CHAP. XXXIII.

Contains an intereſting Diſcovery.

MRS. Darnley received her daughter with unuſual tenderneſs; ſhe felt how much ſhe ſtood in need of her filial care; and her behaviour was dictated by that intereſted kindneſs which only gives in expectation of receiving back doublefold.

Sophia ſaw her pale and emaciated, and was greatly affected with the ſight: ſhe would not mention her ſiſter, for fear of diſcompoſing her; but Mrs. Darnley ſoon introduced the ſubject that was moſt in her thoughts, and exclaimed againſt Harriot's undutifulneſs and want of affection with the moſt violent tranſports of paſſion.

"I

"I have been the beſt of mo-
"thers to her," ſaid ſhe, melting into tears; "I have always indul-
"ged her in all her wiſhes, and
"impaired my fortune to ſupport
"her extravagancies, and how has
"ſhe returned this kindneſs! Would
"you think it, my dear Sophy,
"though ſhe is in affluent circum-
"ſtances, and I, by the loſs of
"my annuity, am plunged into all
"my former diſtreſſes, ſhe has re-
"fuſed to pay thoſe debts which I
"contracted during the time ſhe
"lived with me; and thinks it ſuf-
"ficient to invite me to reſide in
"her houſe, where, no doubt, I
"ſhould feel my dependence ſe-
"verely."

"Sir Charles," ſaid Sophia ſigh-ing, "does not act with his uſual
"generoſity; if he has married my
"ſiſter, why does he ſuffer you
"to be in diſtreſs."

"Married your ſiſter!" repeated Mrs. Darnley, in aſtoniſhment.

"Ah, madam," reſumed Sophia, "is ſhe not married then to Sir "Charles?"

"Why, is it poſſible that you "can wiſh him to be married to "Harriot?" ſaid Mrs. Darnley.

"Alas!" cried Sophia, "ought "I not to wiſh it, when I ſee her "in his houſe?"

"Oh," reſumed Mrs. Darnley, "I perceive your miſtake; but that "houſe is not Sir Charles's now; "Lord L—— bought it of him, "with the furniture, ſome time "ago; it might have been yours, "and without any offence to your "virtue too, yet you thought fit to "refuſe it: but I will not pretend "to reprove one ſo much wiſer "than myſelf—"

"Well, madam," interrupted Sophia eagerly, "then it is not to Sir

"Charles

"Charles that my ſiſter is married,
"to whom is ſhe married?"

"You have ſeen her, have you
"not?" ſaid Mrs. Darnley, looking a little confuſed.

"I have indeed ſeen her," ſaid Sophia, "but ſhe did not explain
"her ſituation to me."

"And do you imagine," reſumed Mrs. Darnley, peeviſhly,
"that ſhe would be leſs reſerved
"with her mother? and if ſhe was
"afraid of telling you the truth, is
"it likely ſhe would own it to
"me?"

"Then I fear it is bad indeed
"with Harriot," cried Sophia, in a melancholy accent, "ſince ſhe has
"ſo much to conceal from a mother
"and a ſiſter."

"You were always cenſorious,
"Sophy," ſaid Mrs. Darnley, with ſome paſſion; "for my part,
"I am reſolved to think the beſt.

"If Lord L——t——is married pri-
"vately to your ſiſter, her charac-
"ter will one day be cleared to the
"world, and ſhe thinks no pru-
"dent perſon can blame her, for
"chuſing to bear for a time a few
"undeſerved cenſures, rather than
"to ſtruggle with poverty and con-
"tempt."

Sophia, now convinced of Harriot's unhappy conduct, burſt into tears. Mrs. Darnley, after looking at her in ſilence a moment, ſaid, with ſome confuſion; "Then you "do not believe your ſiſter is mar-"ried, Sophy?"

"Ah, madam," replied Sophia, "you do not ſay that you know ſhe "is, and whatever reaſons there "might be for concealing her mar-"riage from the world, certainly "there are none for hiding it from "you.—In vain," added ſhe, with ſtill greater emotion, "would your

pa-

"parental tenderneſs ſeek to de-
"ceive yourſelf."

"Reproach me no more with
"my tenderneſs for your ſiſter,"
interrupted Mrs. Darnley, angrily;
"I am too much affected with her
"ingratitude already."

"I am ſorry ſhe is ungrateful,"
ſaid Sophia; "but, oh! my dear
"mamma, it is not fit you ſhould
"accept of her aſſiſtance."

"I hope," ſaid Mrs. Darnley,
caſting down her eyes, "that I
"know what to do as well as my
"daughter.---But Sophy," added
ſhe, after a little pauſe, "I am
"ſorry to tell you, if you do not
"know it already, that if you have
"ſtill any thought of Sir Charles,
"you deceive yourſelf; I am very
"well informed, that a match has
"been propoſed to him, and he
"has given ſo favourable an anſwer
"that

"that it is expected the marriage "will be concluded, as ſoon as he "comes from Paris: I heard it all "from one of the young lady's "relations."

This was a ſevere ſtroke to poor Sophia, who had juſt begun to breathe again, after the anguiſh ſhe had ſuffered, in the belief that Sir Charles had forſaken her for her ſiſter, and added perfidy and baſeneſs to his inconſtancy.

Mrs. Darnley, who ſaw her grow pale, and her eyes ſwimming in tears, while ſhe ſtruggled to conceal her emotions, could not help being affected with her diſtreſs, and endeavoured to conſole her.

Sophia, more ſoftened by this tenderneſs, ſuffered her tears to flow a few moments unreſtrained; then ſuddenly wiping her charming eyes, "Pardon this weakneſs, "ma-

"madam," ſaid ſhe, "this indeed "is not a time to weep for myſelf, "your ſorrows claim all my tears."

"Aye, I have ſorrows enough, "Heaven knows," ſaid Mrs. Darnley, "my debts unpaid, my annuity "gone, what have I to truſt "to?

"Providence," interrupted Sophia, "your piety and my induſtry. "Alas! my dear mamma, your "greateſt affliction is not the loſs "of your annuity, or the debts "with which you are encumbered, "it is my ſiſter's unhappy fall from "virtue. That parent," purſued ſhe, "who ſees a beloved child "become a prey to licentious paſ-"ſions, who ſees her publicly in-"cur ſhame and reproach, expel-"led the ſociety of the good and "virtuous, and lead a life of diſ-"honour embittered with the con-

"tempt of the world, and the ſe-
"cret upbraidings of her own con-
"ſcience; that parent can beſt judge
"of your anguiſh now: I have
"only a ſiſter's feelings for this
"misfortune! but theſe feelings are
"ſtrong enough to make me very
"unhappy."

Mrs. Darnley appeared ſo much moved with this diſcourſe, that Sophia purſued it, till ſhe brought her mother to declare, that ſhe would rather ſuffer all the inconveniencies of poverty, than give a ſanction to Harriot's guilt, by partaking of its reward.

Sophia, to relieve her anxiety, laid down a plan for their future ſubſiſtence, and proved to her, that by her ſkill in ſeveral little uſeful arts, it would be eaſy for her to ſupply her with all the neceſſaries of life. "We

"will

"will firſt," ſaid ſhe, "pay your "debts."

"How is that to be done?" ſaid Mrs. Darnley haſtily.

"The furniture of your houſe," ſaid Sophia, "the plate, and other "pieces of finery, which Sir "Charles Stanley preſented to you, "will, if converted into money, "not only pay your debts, but "provide a little fund for preſent "expences, and a reſerve for future "exigencies; mean while, my in-"duſtry and care will, I hope, "keep want far from you. I have "friends, who will find employ-"ment for my little talents; and "if I can but make your life eaſy "and comfortable, I ſhall think "myſelf happy."

Mrs. Darnley, with tears in her eyes, embraced her daughter, bid her diſpoſe of every thing as ſhe pleaſed,

pleaſed, and aſſured her ſhe would endeavour to bear her new condition of life with patience and reſignation.

Sophia immediately wrote to a gentleman of the law, who had been an intimate friend of her father's; and he undertook to manage their little affairs in town. A few days afterwards he brought them a hundred pounds, which was all that remained from the ſale, after every demand upon Mrs. Darnley was paid.

She read over the accounts with great emotion, bitterly regretting every trinket ſhe had parted with, and told Sophia, that it was abſolutely neceſſary they ſhould ſettle in ſome village near town, for ſhe could not bear the thoughts of expoſing

posing her poverty, to her acquaintance, and of being seen in a worse condition than formerly.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXIV.

Sophia continues to act romantickly, and Harriot like a Woman who knows the World.

SOPHIA, who thought her mother's declining health a better reaſon for not reſiding in London, hired in an adjacent village, at a very ſmall rent, a little houſe, or rather cottage, ſo neat, and ſituated ſo happily, that an imagination lively as hers was, and a little romantick, could not fail of being charmed with it. To this place ſhe removed her books, and being provided by her friend Dolly with an innocent country girl for a ſervant, ſhe conducted her mother to her rural abode, and had the ſatisfaction to find her pleaſed with it, novelty having always charms for her,

her, and here for a few days, it ſupplied the place of thoſe other gratifications to which ſhe had been accuſtomed.

In the midſt of theſe cares, Sophia did not forget her unhappy ſiſter: ſhe wrote ſeveral letters to her, in which ſhe employed all the power of virtuous eloquence to bring her to a ſenſe of her errors, but in vain.

Harriot did not deign to anſwer her, but in a letter to her mother, ſhe complained of the injurious treatment ſhe received from Sophia, and earneſtly intreated her to leave her ſiſter, and reſide with her.

Although Mrs. Darnley refuſed this offer with ſeeming ſteadineſs, yet her diſcontent was but too apparent. A life of retirement, which often obliged her to ſeek in herſelf, thoſe reſources againſt lan-

guor

guor and melancholy, which ſhe uſed to find in the diſſipations of the town, could not be grateful to one who had never accuſtomed herſelf to reflection, whoſe mind was filled with trifles, and its whole ſtock of ideas derived from dreſs, cards, and every other faſhionable folly.

To be capable of enjoying a rural life, there is ſomething more neceſſary than a good underſtanding: innocence and purity of manners muſt contribute to give a reliſh to pleaſures, which are founded in reaſon, virtue, and piety.

Hence it was, that Sophia, in the bloom of youth, found happineſs in the ſolitude of a village, while her mother, in a declining age, panted after the vanities of the town.

In vain did Mr. Herbert fill the letters he wrote to Mrs. Darnley, with maxims of morality and pious admo-

admonitions; he experienced here the truth of that obſervation, that it is a work of great difficulty to diſpoſſeſs vice from a heart, where long poſſeſſion ſeems to plead preſcription.

Sophia, who knew her mother's taſte for living at eaſe, that ſhe might be able to gratify it, applied herſelf diligently to her work, which was a piece of embroidery, that had been beſpoke by a benevolent lady, in order to give her preſent employment; and, by exhibiting it as a proof of her ingenuity, to procure her more. She likewiſe exerciſed her invention in drawing little deſigns for fan-mounts; and always choſe ſuch ſubjects as conveyed ſome moral leſſon to the mind, while they pleaſed the imagination.

Some of theſe drawings were diſpoſed of, by the lady her friend, ſo advantageouſly, that Sophia was

encouraged to purſue her labour; and Mrs. Darnley, flattered by the proſpect of more eaſy circumſtances, began to enlarge her ſcheme of expence, made little excurſions about the country in a poſt-chaiſe, talked of hiring a better houſe, and of paſſing two months at leaſt in London during the winter.

Mean time Harriot became more earneſt in ſolicitations to her mother, to come and live with her; her ſituation began to be ſo generally ſuſpected, that ſhe was in danger of being wholly neglected.

She wrote to her in a ſtrain of tenderneſs and duty, that revived all the ill-judging parent's affection, who invited her to make her a viſit in her little retreat, and promiſed her a favourable reception even from Sophia herſelf.

Sophia was indeed far from oppoſing this viſit; ſhe was rather deſirous

rous of drawing her ſiſter thither frequently, with a hope that her example and her arguments might one day influence her to change her conduct.

Harriot received this invitation with joy; for ſuch was the depravity of her mind, that ſhe exulted in having an opportunity of diſplaying the grandeur of her dreſs, and equipage to her ſiſter; to her who had made virtuous poverty her choice, and ſhewn that ſhe deſpiſed riches, when they were to be purchaſed by guilt. *The pride of human nature* (ſays an eminent writer) *takes its riſe from its corruption, as worms are produced by putrefaction.*

The wretched fallen Harriot was proud! the diamonds that glittered in her hair, the gilt chariot, and the luxurious table; theſe monuments of her diſgrace contributed to keep

up the insolence of a woman, who by the loss of her honour was lower than the meanest of her servants, who could boast of an uncorrupted virtue.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXV.

Harriot viſits her mother in her Cottage.

SOPHIA was buſily employed upon her embroidery, when Harriot, from her gay chariot, alighted at her door; ſhe entered that humble abode of innocence and induſtry, in a kind of triumph, and accoſted her ſiſter with a haughty expreſſion of ſuperiority in her looks and air, as if ſhe expected the ſplendor of her appearance ſhould ſtrike her with awe.

Sophia received her with the modeſt dignity of conſcious virtue; and Harriot, tho' incapable of much reflection, yet ſoon perceived the miſerable figure ſhe made, in the preſence of ſuch a character, and ſtood ſilent and abaſhed,

while Sophia contemplated her finery with an eye of pity and of anguiſh.

Harriot, at length recovering herſelf, aſked for her mother, who that moment entered the room. The ſight of her daughter's equipage, had thrown her into an agreeable flutter of ſpirits, and ſhe readily pardoned the fine lady, all the faults of the ungrateful child.

Harriot, emboldened by ſo kind a reception, propoſed to her to accompany her to town, promiſing to make her abode with her agreeable, by every inſtance of duty and affection.

Mrs. Darnley bluſhed, and was ſilent. Sophia fixed her eyes upon her mother, anxious and impatient for her anſwer; ſhe caſt a timid glance at Sophia: ſhe read in her ſpeaking eyes her ſentiments of this propoſal; and turning to Harriot,

riot, ſhe told her faintly, that not being ſatisfied with her conduct, it would be very improper for her to countenance it, by reſiding with her.

Harriot burſt into tears, and exclaimed againſt her ſiſter's malice, who, ſhe ſaid, acted like her moſt cruel enemy, and ſought to ruin her character, by eſtranging herſelf from her company, and preventing her mother from taking notice of her.

Sophia, with great gentleneſs, proved to her, that the loſs of her reputation was the neceſſary conſequence of her living in a manner unſuitable to her circumſtances; that her mother and her, by complying with her requeſt, could not preſerve her from cenſure, but would incur it themſelves.

"You call me cruel, Harriot," ſaid ſhe, "for eſtranging myſelf "from your company; but conſi-

"der a little, whether it is not "you that are both cruel and un-"juſt. Why would you deprive "me of the only reward the world "beſtows on me, for a life of vo-"luntary poverty; you have ex-"changed a good name for dreſs "and equipage; and I, to preſerve "one, ſubject myſelf to labour and "indigence: you enjoy your pur-"chaſe; but I ſhould loſe mine, "were I to have that complaiſance "for you which you require. "Leave me my reputation then, "ſince it is the ſole recompence of "thoſe hardſhips to which I wil-"lingly ſubmit; and if you wiſh "to recover yours, be contented to "be poor like me."

Sophia, finding her ſiſter liſtened to her, tho' it was ſullenly, and with down-caſt eyes, expatiated in a tender manner upon the errors of her conduct, and the fatal con-

ſequences

ſequences that were likely to follow.

Harriot at length interrupted her, with a pert air, and ſaid, "She would not be taught her "duty by her younger ſiſter;" then turning to her mother, "I "hope, madam," ſaid ſhe, "my "ſiſter will not have ſo much "power with you, as to make you "forbid my coming here."

She put her handkerchief to her eyes, as ſhe ſaid this; to which Mrs. Darnley replied, with great vehemence, "That no perſon on "earth ſhould ever prevail upon "her to caſt off her child."

Sophia was ſilent, and obſerving that her preſence ſeemed to lay them under ſome reſtraint, ſhe roſe up, to retire to her work, telling her ſiſter, as ſhe paſſed by her "That far from hindering "her viſits, ſhe would rather en-

courage her to repeat them often, "that she might be convinced it "was possible, to be happy in a "cottage."

Harriot laughed, and muttered the words romantick and affectation, which Sophia took no notice of, but left her at liberty to converse freely with her mother.

Mrs. Darnley talked to her at first in a chiding strain, and affected to assume the authority of a parent; but, a slave to her appetites, she could not resist any opportunity of gratifying them; and Harriot found it no difficult matter to force a present upon her, to supply those expences which her extravagance, and not her wants, made necessary.

Harriot now came often to the village, and gave it out, that she was upon the best terms imaginable with her mother and sister, not doubt-

doubting but the world would ceaſe to ſuſpect her, ſince Sophia approved her conduct.

The frequency and the length of her viſits made Sophia entertain hopes of her reformation, ſince the time ſhe ſpent with her mother, was taken from that dangerous and immoral diſſipation, which forms the circle of what is called a gay life. For it is with our manners as with our health; the abatement of vice is a degree of virtue, the abatement of diſeaſe is a degree of health.

Mr. Herbert being perfectly recovered, filled Sophia with extreme joy, by the account he ſent her of it, and of his reſolution to come and live near her.

While ſhe impatiently expected his arrival, and ſent many a longing look towards the road, near which her little cottage was ſituated,

tuated, ſhe one day ſaw a gentleman ride by full ſpeed, who in his perſon and air had a great reſemblance to Sir Charles Stanley. Her heart, by its throbbing emotion, ſeemed to acknowledge its conqueror; for poor Sophia was ſtill in love: ſhe loved, though ſhe deſpaired of ever being happy; and by thus perſiſting in a hopeleſs paſſion, contradicted that maxim, that love, like fire, cannot ſubſiſt without continual motion, and ceaſes to be as ſoon as it ceaſes to hope or fear.

Sophia, not able to remove her eyes from the place where ſhe fancied ſhe had ſeen Sir Charles, continued to look fixedly towards the road, and was beginning to believe ſhe had been miſtaken, when a ſervant in Sir Charles's livery rode by alſo, and put it out of doubt that ſhe had really ſeen the maſter.

This

This unexpected incident awakened a thouſand tender melancholy ideas in her mind; and finding herſelf too much ſoftened, ſhe had recourſe again to her work, to divert her imagination from an object, ſhe had vainly endeavoured to forget.

CHAP. XXXVI.

Sir Charles appears again upon the Scene.

SOPHIA was not deceived when ſhe imagined ſhe had ſeen Sir Charles; it was really he who had rode by her window, and it was her little abode he was in ſearch of, though in his extream eagerneſs he had overlooked it.

He had left England with a hope that change of ſcene, and a variety of new objects, would efface the idea of Sophia from his heart, and reſtore him to his former tranquility; but amidſt all the delights of Paris he found himſelf oppreſt with langour: no amuſements could entertain him, no converſation engage his attention; diſguſted with every thing he ſaw

and

and heard, peeviſh, diſcontented, and weary of the world, he avoided all company, and had recourſe to books for relief; but Sophia was too much in his thoughts to render ſtudy either inſtructive or amuſing. He paſt whole days in ſolitude, feeding his melancholy with the reflection of a thouſand paſt circumſtances which ſerved to ſoften his mind, and make him feel his loſs more ſenſibly.

When he reflected on her exalted virtues, her wit, her elegance, the attractive graces of her perſon, and the irreſiſtable ſweetneſs of her manners, he lamented his hard fate that had put ſuch a treaſure out of his reach; but when his conſcience told him that it had once been in his power to have become poſſeſſor of this treaſure, that he had trifled with that innocent affection till he had alienated it from himſelf to another

object,

object; his anguiſh became inſupportable, and he ſought to relieve it by rouſing his indignation againſt her, for her preference of ſo unworthy a rival.

He called to mind her interview with this happy rival in the field, and concluded he was far more favoured by her than himſelf had ever been, ſince her diſcourſe to him had produced ſo tender and paſſionate an expreſſion of acknowledgment as that ſhe had beheld.

Theſe circumſtances, which his imagination dwelt upon in order to leſſen his regret, added to it all the ſtings of jealouſy; ſo that, almoſt frantic with rage and grief, he was a hundred times upon the point of committing ſome deſperate action.

A violent fever was the conſequence of theſe tranſports, which, after confining him a long time to his bed, left his body in a weak and

languiſhing

languiſhing condition, and his mind ſunk in an habitual melancholy.

His phyſicians recommended to him the air of Montpelier, and he was preparing to ſet out for that place when he happened to meet with a gentleman who made him alter his reſolution.

This perſon had been his governor, and now attended Mr. Howard in the ſame quality.

Sir Charles, who had a ſlight acquaintance with Mrs. Howard, was prevailed upon, nowithſtanding his averſion to company, to receive a viſit from her ſon: he invited the young gentleman to dine with him, and he having not yet forgot the lovely Sophia, drank her health after dinner by the name of miſs Darnley.

Sir Charles, who could not hear that name without a viſible emotion, told him he knew two young ladies ſo called, and aſked whether it was

the

the eldeſt or the youngeſt ſiſter that he meant?

Mr. Howard replied, "That he "was ignorant till then that miſs "Darnley had a ſiſter."

"Yes ſhe has a ſiſter, ſaid his "governor, who is much hand-"ſomer than herſelf, and for whom "a youthful paſſion would be "thought perhaps more excuſa-"ble."

The young gentleman, who knew his governor talked in that contemptuous manner of Sophia in compliance with his mother's humour, in revenge avowed his admiration of her in the moſt paſſionate terms, and forgetting that Sir Charles had ſaid he was acquainted with her, deſcribed her excellencies with all the enthuſiaſm of a lover.

Sir Charles liſtened in ſilence; and when the other had done ſpeaking told him, with an air of forced gaiety,

ty, that it was eaſy to ſee he was very much in love.

This, indeed, was his real opinion; nevertheleſs, he felt no emotions of jealouſy or reſentment againſt a rival whom he believed as unhappy as himſelf; he aſked him with a ſeeming careleſſneſs if miſs Sophia was not to be married to the ſon of a rich farmer in the village where ſhe lived? and waited his anſwer with an agitation of mind which appeared ſo plainly in the frequent changes of his colour, that Mr. Howard muſt have obſerved it, had not the queſtion given him almoſt as much concern.

After a ſhort pauſe he replied, "That he never heard ſhe was go-"ing to be married;" but, added he, ſighing, "I remember I have "ſeen a very handſome young man "at

" at Mr. Lawſon's, who per-
" haps ----"

" Aye, aye, interrupted his go-
" vernor, ſmiling, he was the fa-
" voured lover no doubt, you have
" nothing to do but to forget her
" as ſoon as you can."

The youth ſat penſive and ſilent for ſome time, then ſuddenly riſing, took leave of Sir Charles and went away; his governor prepared to follow him, but the baronet, anxious to hear more of Sophia, detained him to ask ſeveral queſtions concerning her acquaintance with Mr. Howard.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXVII.

Gives the reader ſome neceſſary information.

SIR Charles found his old friend had loſt no part of his former candor and ſincerity: though by the truſt repoſed in him he was obliged to diſcountenance as much as poſſible the paſſion of his pupil for a young woman ſo much his inferior in rank and fortune; yet having ſeen and converſed with Sophia, he did juſtice to her extraordinary merit, and acknowledged that Mrs. Howard had treated her harſhly.

He related to Sir Charles in what manner Mrs. Howard had invited her to her houſe, and the ſuſpicions ſhe entertained of Sophia's encouraging her ſon's paſſion, and deſign to enſnare him into a clandeſtine marriage.

marriage. "Suſpicions," added he, "which her ſubſequent behaviour "entirely deſtroyed, for the youth "was raſh enough to avow his paſ- "ſion openly, and ſollicited her by "frequent letters and meſſages to "grant him an interview, which "ſhe abſolutely refuſed, and this "conduct did her honour and "procured her great eſteem; yet it "is very likely that her affections "are otherwiſe engaged, and that "ſhe has ſome difficulties to en- "counter, for ſhe looks thought- "ful and melancholy, and affects "retirement more than perſons of "her age generally do.

Sir Charles was thrown into ſo profound a reverie by this account of Sophia, that he heard not a word of what his friend afterwards ſaid which had no relation to this intereſting ſubject, and ſcarce perceived when he went away.

After

After reflecting a long time with mingled grief, reſentment, and compaſſion, upon her melancholy, which he ſuppoſed was occaſioned by ſome diſappointment in the affair of her marriage with the young farmer, and which probably her want of fortune was the cauſe of, he ſuddenly formed the generous deſign of removing this obſtacle to her union with the perſon whom ſhe preferred to him, and, by making her happy, entitle himſelf to her eſteem, ſince he had unfortunately loſt her heart.

The novelty of this reſolution and its extraordinary generoſity, filled him with ſo many ſelf-flattering ideas, as ſuſpended for a while his jealouſy and his grief.

Inſtead of going to Montpelier he ſet out immediately for England, and during his journey was continually applauding himſelf for the uncommon

mon diſintereſtedneſs of his conduct.

Nothing is more certain, than that the motives even of our beſt actions will not always bear examination; we deceive ourſelves firſt, and our vanity is too much intereſted in the deception, to make us wiſh to detect it. Sir Charles either did not or would not perceive the latent hope that lurked within his boſom, and which, perhaps, ſuggeſted the deſigns he had formed.

How muſt ſuch an inſtance of generous paſſion, thought he, affect a mind ſo delicately ſenſible as Sophia's! ſhe who had once loved him, and what was more than probable had not yet entirely forgot him.

He never aſked himſelf, why his imagination dwelt upon theſe pleaſing images? why he proſecuted his

his journey with ſuch eager haſte, as if the purport of it was to receive, not to reſign for ever the woman he ſo paſſionately loved?

When he arrived at his own houſe ſcarce would he allow himſelf a few minutes reſt after his fatiguing journey: he haſtened to Mr. Herbert's lodgings, to prevail upon him to juſtify by his concurrence the deſigns he had formed in favour of Sophia.

Mean time the ſecret and powerful impulſe by which he was actuated, kept his mind in a continual tumult. He hoped, he feared, he wiſhed: he was all anxious expectation, all trembling doubt; he heard with grief that Mr. Herbert was at Bath; for now he knew not how to get acceſs to Sophia, who being ignorant of his intentions,

and offended by his behaviour, might poſſibly refuſe to ſee him.

He went to the houſe where Mrs. Darnley lived when he left England; he was ſurpriſed to ſee it ſhut up. This incident perplexed him more, and rendered him more impatient.

He returned to his houſe, paſſed a reſtleſs night, and early in the morning ordering his horſes to be ſaddled, ſet out immediately for Mr. Lawſon's; where he arrived before he had reſolved how to introduce himſelf, or who he ſhould enquire for.

However, upon the appearance of a ſervant at the door, he aſked for Mr. Herbert; which Mr. Lawſon hearing, came out himſelf, and, though he did not know Sir Charles, politely requeſted him to alight, telling him, he had juſt received a letter

from Mr. Herbert, which acquainted him that he was perfectly recovered, and that he was in the way to London.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

Sir Charles has an interview with Mr. Lawſon.

SIR Charles accepted Mr. Lawſon's invitation, and alighting, followed him into a parlour, but in ſuch perturbation of mind that he ſcarce knew what he did. The good curate, ſurpriſed at the penſiveneſs and ſilence of his gueſt, knew not what to ſay to him, or how to entertain him: he gave him an account of Mr. Herbert's illneſs, which ſeemed to engage his attention very little; but happening to mention Sophia in the courſe of his relation, the young baronet ſtarted as from a dream, and turned his eyes upon him with a look of eagerneſs and anxiety, but ſaid not a word.

Mr. Lawſon pauſed, as expecting he was going to aſk him a queſtion, which Sir Charles perceiving, ſaid with ſome confuſion, "I beg your "pardon, Sir, you mentioned miſs "Sophia, I have the honour to "know her, pray how does ſhe "do?"

"I hope ſhe is well, Sir," replied Mr. Lawſon, "I have not ſeen "her a long time."

"Then ſhe does not reſide with you now," ſaid Sir Charles, with a countenance as pale as death, dreading to hear ſomething ſtill more fatal.

As Mr. Lawſon was going to anſwer him, William, not knowing his father-in-law had company, entered the room abruptly; but ſeeing the baronet, he bowed, apologized for his intruſion, and inſtantly retired.

The various emotions with which

this ſudden and unexpected ſight of his rival filled the breaſt of Sir Charles, cauſed ſuch a wildneſs in his looks, that Mr. Lawſon, in great aſtoniſhment and perplexity aſked him if he was taken ill?

Sir Charles endeavouring to compoſe himſelf, replied, "That he was "very well," but in a faultering accent aſked, who the young gentleman was that had juſt left the room.

Mr. Lawſon told him he was his ſon-in-law.

"Your ſon-in-law!" cried Sir Charles, eagerly, "what! mar-"ried to your daughter! is it poſ-"ſible?"

Mr. Lawſon knew enough of Sophia's ſtory to make him comprehend now who this young gentleman was, who diſcovered ſo extraordinary a concern upon this occaſion:

ſion; and, charmed to have an opportunity of doing her ſervice by removing thoſe ſuſpicions which he had been told had produced ſo fatal a reverſe in her fortune, he gave the baronet a circumſtantial account of his daughter's marriage: ſenſible that he was too much intereſted in this detail to make him think it impertinent, he introduced it no otherways than by declaring himſelf under the greateſt obligation to miſs Sophia, who having honoured his daughter with her friendſhip, had been the chief inſtrument of her preſent happineſs.

While the good curate related all the circumſtances of an affair which had had ſuch melancholy conſequences, the baronet liſtened to him with an attention ſtill as the grave; his eyes were fixed upon his with a look of the moſt eager anxiety,

and he ſcarce ſuffered himſelf to breathe for fear of loſing any of his words.

In proportion as his doubts were removed, his countenance expreſſed more ſatisfaction, and when, upon his reflecting on all that he had heard, it appeared plainly that the fatal meeting which had cauſed him ſo much anguiſh, was the effect of Sophia's ſolicitude to ſerve her friend, and that the paſſionate action of the youth was an acknowledgment of gratitude, not an expreſſion of love, he was not able to conceal the exceſs of his joy, but, riſing up in a ſudden tranſport, he took the curate's hand, and preſſing it eagerly, "You know not," ſaid he, "Mr. Lawſon, how happy "you have made me!-but where "is miſs Sophia, is ſhe gone to "Bath with her good friend Mr. "Herbert?" "No

"No, Sir," replied Mr. Lawſon; "ſhe lives with her mother.
"You know, I ſuppoſe, that Mrs.
"Darnley has loſt her annuity by
"the death of the gentleman upon
"whom it was charged."

"I never heard it till now," ſaid the baronet, whoſe tenderneſs was alarmed for his Sophia; "tell me
"I beg you what is her preſent
"ſituation."

"Her eldeſt daughter has left
"her," ſaid Mr. Lawſon, "and ſhe
"has retired with miſs Sophia to a
"village about five miles from
"hence, in the road to London,
"where that excellent young lady
"ſupports her mother and her-
"ſelf by the labour of her
"hands."

"Angelick creature!" exclaimed Sir Charles, with his eyes ſwimming in tears. Then, after a little pauſe,

he desired a direction to the place where Mrs. Darnley lived, and took a kind leave of Mr. Lawson, telling him he hoped soon to visit him again.

Sir Charles, although he galloped as fast as it was possible, found his horse went too slow for his impatience; so eager was he to see Sophia, and gain her pardon for the unreasonable conduct which his jealousy and rage had made him guilty of.

The account Mr. Lawson had given him of the part she had taken in his daughter's marriage with the youth whom he had considered as his rival, not only removed the torturing pangs of jealousy, which he had so long felt, but made him view several circumstances in Sophia's behaviour in a light favourable to his own ardent wishes.

He

He fondly fancied that the melancholy in which he had heard ſhe was plunged, was occaſioned by a tender remembrance of him; and that the hope of ſtill being his, might have been the chief cauſe of her rejecting the addreſſes of Mr. Howard.

How different were theſe ideas from the gloomy ones which had hitherto perplexed his mind! he ſeemed like a man waked from a frightful dream of deſpair and death, to a certainty of life and joy.

Amidſt theſe tranſporting reveries he had paſſed by Sophia's houſe, without perceiving it to be the ſame he had been directed to; and when he had reached the end of the village, he looked about for it in vain, and ſaw no one of whom he could enquire

for it but an old woman, who was ſitting under a tree near the road, making up a noſegay of ſome flowers, ſuch as the late ſeaſon produced.

He ſtopped his horſe, and aſked her if ſhe knew where Mrs. Darnley lived? At the mention of that name ſhe roſe as haſtily as her feebleneſs would permit her, and told him, ſhe knew the houſe very well; and, if he pleaſed, would go and ſhew it him. "I am making up this noſegay "for the ſweet young gentlewo-"man her daughter," ſaid the old woman: "I carry her flowers "every day; heaven bleſs her, ſhe "is my only ſupport. There "is a great many fine folks here-"abouts, from whom I could ne-"ver get any relief; but ſince "ſhe came hither I have wanted

for

"for nothing. Pray, let me ſhew "you her houſe; old and weak as "I am, I would walk ten miles to "do her ſervice."

Sir Charles, alighting from his horſe, ordered his ſervant to lead it to the neareſt public houſe, and wait for him there; he told the old woman, he would accept of her offer, and walk along with her. Then taking two guineas out of his pocket, he gave them to her, in reward, he ſaid, for the gratitude ſhe expreſſed for her young benefactreſs.

The good woman received his bounty with a tranſport of ſurpriſe and joy, and pleaſingly repaid him by talking of his beloved Sophia; of whom ſhe related many inſtances of tenderneſs and charity towards the poor of the village, and filled him with admiration of that

true benevolence, which even in the midſt of indigence, could adminiſter to the greater wants of her fellow creatures.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXIX.

Sophia receives an unexpected Viſit.

WHEN they came within ſight of Sophia's little cottage, the old woman, pointing to it, told him, Mrs. Darnley and her daughter lived there: upon which the baronet, diſmiſſing her, walked up to it with diſordered haſte. A row of wooden pales led to a ſmall graſs-plat before the door.

As he approached, he ſaw Sophia ſitting at a window at work. He ſtopped to gaze upon her; ſhe appeared to him more lovely, more engaging than ever. He wiſhed, yet dreaded her looking up, leſt her firſt thoughts upon ſeeing him being unfavourable, ſhe ſhould reſolve to refuſe his viſit. He went forwards

wards with a beating heart, and cautiouſly opening the little gate, reached the door of this humble habitation unheard and unſeen by Sophia: the door flew open at his touch; poverty has no need of bolts and bars, and every good angel is the guard of innocence and virtue.

The noiſe he made in entering, and the ſound of her name, pronounced in a tender accent, made Sophia haſtily raiſe her head. At ſight of Sir Charles, ſhe ſtarted from her chair, her work fell from her trembling hands, ſhe looked at him in ſilent aſtoniſhment, unable, and perhaps unwilling to avoid him.

The baronet, whoſe heart laboured with the ſtrongeſt emotions of tenderneſs, anxiety, hope, and fear, had not power to utter a word; and while her ſurpriſe kept her

her motionleſs, threw himſelf at her feet, and taking one of her hands, preſſed it reſpectfully to his lips, tears at the ſame time falling from his eyes.

Sophia, whoſe gentle mind was ſenſibly affected with this action, and the paleneſs and langour which appeared in his countenance, found it impoſſible to treat him with that ſeverity which his capricious conduct ſeemed to demand of her; nevertheleſs, ſhe drew away her hand, which he yielded with reluctant ſubmiſſion.

"I hoped," ſaid ſhe, in an accent that expreſſed more ſoftneſs and grief than anger or diſdain, "that I ſhould be ſpared any "farther inſults of this ſort from "you; thoſe I have already ſuf-"fered have ſufficiently puniſhed "me for my weak credulity."

Sir Charles, when ſhe began to ſpeak,

ſpeak, roſe up; but continued gazing on her with the moſt paſſionate tenderneſs, while every word ſhe uttered ſeemed to pierce his heart.

"I will not," purſued Sophia, gathering firmneſs as ſhe ſpoke, "aſk "you, why you have intruded upon "me thus unexpectedly? or why "you aſſume a behaviour ſo little "of a-piece with your paſt actions? "I only beg you to believe, that "I am not again to be deceived; "and although I am perſuaded "my good opinion is of no con-"ſequence to you, yet I will tell "you, that if it is poſſible to "regain it, it will be by never "more importuning me with vi-"ſits, which my ſituation in life "makes it very improper for me to "admit of."

Sophia,

Sophia, when ſhe had ſaid this, went out of the room, without caſting a look back upon Sir Charles, who followed her in great diſorder, conjuring her only to hear what he had to ſay.

As ſhe was paſſing to her own chamber, ſhe was met by her mother, who ſeeing Sir Charles, was filled with ſurpriſe and joy; and perceiving that Sophia was avoiding him, cried to her with an angry accent, "Where are you go-"ing? what is the meaning of this "rudeneſs?"

Sophia, without anſwering her, retired to her own room, not without great perturbation of mind; for there was ſomething in the baronet's looks and words that ſeemed to merit a hearing at leaſt; but ſhe dreaded the weakneſs of her own heart, and was fully perſuaded that any condeſcenſion on her

her ſide would give him too great an advantage over her.

Mrs. Darnley, finding any endeavours to retain her were fruitleſs, advanced towards Sir Charles with great obſequiouſneſs, congratulated him upon his return, and thanked him for the honour he did her in viſiting her in her poor little habitation.

Sir Charles ſaluted her reſpectfully, and took a ſeat. "There "is a ſad alteration, Sir," ſaid ſhe, "in my poor affairs ſince I ſaw "you laſt. I never thought to "have received you in ſuch a ho-"vel! You have heard, I ſuppoſe, "of my misfortune?"

Sir Charles, who was in great confuſion of thought, and had ſcarce heard a word ſhe ſaid, replied careleſsly, "Yes, madam, I am ſorry "for it."

The coldneſs of this anſwer caſt a damp

a damp upon thoſe hopes which ſhe had eagerly admitted upon ſeeing him again; and, impatient to be relieved from her tormenting anxiety on account of this unexpected viſit, ſhe aſked him abruptly, "whether ſhe might "wiſh him joy, for ſhe heard," ſhe ſaid, "that he was going to be "married."

Sir Charles, rouzed by this queſtion, replied haſtily, "Who could "have told you any thing ſo unlikely? Married! no, madam, "there never was any foundation "for ſuch a report."

"Indeed I believe ſo," ſaid Mrs. Darnley, almoſt breathleſs with joy to find him deny it ſo earneſtly. "To be ſure people are "very envious and ill-natured, "and thoſe who told me, no "doubt, deſigned to do you an ill "office."

"And

"And they have ſucceeded," ſaid Sir Charles, ſighing, "if they "have been able to perſuade miſs "Sophia, that after having aſpir-"ed to the poſſeſſion of her, I "could deſcend to love any other "woman. I came to implore her "pardon, madam," purſued he, "for all the extravagancies of "my paſt conduct, and for that "unreaſonable jealouſy which was "the ſource of them, could I "have been ſo happy to have "prevailed upon her to have heard "me."

"What!" interrupted Mrs. Darnley eagerly, "and was my "daughter ſo rude as to leave you "without hearing what you had "to ſay. I proteſt I am aſham-"ed of her behaviour; but I hope "you will be ſo good to excuſe it, "Sir; I will inſiſt upon her com-"ing in again."

"No,

"No, madam," ſaid Sir Charles, holding her, for ſhe was hurrying a-"way, miſs Sophia muſt not be con-"ſtrained: I cannot bear that."

Mrs. Darnley unwillingly reſumed her ſeat, and inly fretting at her daughter's obſtinacy, trembled for the event of this viſit.

Sir Charles, after a ſilence of ſome minutes, ſuddenly roſe up, and took his leave. Mrs. Darnley, in great anxiety, followed him to the door, and ſaid ſhe hoped to ſee him again. He anſwered only by a low bow, and walked away full of doubt and perplexity.

Sophia's ſteadineſs in refuſing to hear him, baniſhed all thoſe flattering ideas of her tenderneſs for him, which he had ſo eagerly admitted; for he concluded that if her heart had not been ſteeled by indifference, ſhe would, notwithſtanding

withſtanding her juſt reaſons for reſentment, have been rejoiced to give him an opportunity of juſtifying himſelf.

He had reached the houſe where his ſervant was attending with the horſes, without having determined what to do. To return to town without ſeeing Sophia again, and being aſſured of a reconciliation, was miſery which he could not ſupport; and he dreaded making a new attempt to ſee her, leſt he ſhould receive more proofs of her inſenſibility and diſdain.

In this perplexity the ſight of Mr. Herbert alighting from a ſtage-coach, was a relief as great as it was unexpected; and in the ſudden joy he felt at meeting with a man whoſe interpoſition could be ſo uſeful to him, he forgot that his former behaviour muſt neceſſarily

neceſſarily have given riſe to ſtrong prejudices againſt him, and ran up to embrace the good old man with extreme cordiality.

CHAP.

CHAP. XL.

In which the History begins to grow dull.

MR. Herbert was ſurpriſed at this meeting, and repaid the civilities of the young baronet with ſome coldneſs: upon which Sir Charles, in ſome confuſion, deſired to have a few moments converſation with him.

They walked together down a meadow; and Sir Charles, having with a candor and ſincerity becoming the rectitude of his intentions, related all thoſe circumſtances which had concurred to excite his jealouſy, and with that powerful eloquence which paſſion inſpires, expatiated upon

the motives of his conduct, a conduct which he acknowledged laid him open to the moſt unfavourable ſuſpicions; Mr. Herbert, convinced of his ſincerity, and full of compaſſion for the uneaſineſs which his miſtaken jealouſy had cauſed him, undertook to make his peace with Sophia, and aſſured him he would very ſhortly wait upon him in town.

This would not ſatisfy the anxious lover; he declared he would not leave the place till he was aſſured of his pardon; and Mr. Herbert, who certainly was not diſpleaſed with his obſtinacy, could with difficulty perſuade him to wait only till the next day for an account of his ſucceſs.

Sir Charles unwillingly took

the road to London, and Mr. Herbert haſtened to congratulate his beloved charge upon the agreeable proſpect that was once more opening for her.

Mrs. Darnley had, during this interval, been employed in reproaching poor Sophia for her behaviour to Sir Charles. In the vexation of her heart, ſhe exclaimed in the ſevereſt terms againſt her pride and obſtinacy; ſhe told her, ſhe might be aſſured Sir Charles would never attempt to ſee her again; that it was plain he was diſguſted with her bad temper.

She burſt into a paſſion of tears, while ſhe enumerated the glorious advantages of that rank and fortune, which, ſhe ſaid, Sophia had thrown from her; and among many motives which ſhe

ſhe urged, ought to have determined her to act otherwiſe, that of being able to out-ſhine her ſiſter was one.

Sophia anſwered only by ſighs: ſhe herſelf was not abſolutely ſatisfied with the unrelenting ſervenity with which ſhe had treated Sir Charles. The more ſhe reflected upon his behaviour, the more ſhe condemned herſelf for not hearing what he had to offer in his own defence.

She had once thought it probable that he had been deceived by the report that was ſpread through Mrs. Gibbons's folly, of her encouraging the addreſſes of her nephew, and his extravagant conduct might be occaſioned by jealouſy; a fault which a woman is always diſpoſed to pardon in a

lover. While ſhe revolved theſe thoughts in her mind, Mrs. Darnley perceived her uneaſineſs, and added to it by new reproaches.

Mr. Herbert's arrival put an end to this tormenting ſcene. Sophia firſt heard his voice, and flew to receive him; Mrs. Darnley followed, and ſeeing her bathed in tears, while the good old man ſaluted her with the tenderneſs of a parent, ſhe told him, with an air half ſerious, half gay, that her daughter loved him ſo well, ſhe had no affection for any one elſe. She then entered abruptly upon the affair of Sir Charles, though ſhe hardly expected Mr. Herbert would join with her in condemning Sophia.

He pleaſingly ſurpriſed her by ſaying

ſaying, that Sophia was to blame; and that he came prepared to chide her for her petulance and obſtinacy.

Mr. Herbert, who ſaw a ſweet impatience in Sophia's looks, explained himſelf immediately, and told her he had met Sir Charles; who had fully removed all the ſuſpicions his ſtrange conduct had occaſioned, and convinced him, that he deſerved more pity than cenſure.

"No doubt." purſued he, looking on Sophia with a ſmile, "you will be ſurpriſed to "hear, young lady, that Sir "Charles was witneſs to the "interview you had in the mea-"dow behind Mr. Lawſon's "houſe, with a certain hand-"ſome youth, whom he had

"heard was his rival, and a "favoured rival too. What "were his thoughts, do you "imagine, when he saw this "handſome youth throw himſelf "at your feet, and kiſs your "hand?"

Mrs. Darnley now looked at her daughter in great aſtoniſhment; and Sophia, who yet did not recollect the circumſtance of her meeting William, was ſo perplexed, ſhe knew not what to ſay.

Mr. Herbert enjoyed her innocent confuſion for a few moments, and then repeated all that Sir Charles had told him, of his jealouſy and rage; his vain attempts to baniſh her from his remembrance; the reſolution he had formed after his con-

ver-

verſation with Mr. Howard concerning her; and how happily he had been undeceived at Mr. Lawſon's, where he found his ſuppoſed rival was the huſband of her friend.

"Well," interrupted Mrs. Darnley, with great vehemence, "I hope you are ſatisfied now, "Sophia! I hope you will treat "Sir Charles with more civi- "lity if he comes again.---Mr. "Herbert, I beg you will exert "your power over her upon "this occaſion---I think there "is no doubt of Sir Charles's "honourable intentions."

Thus ſhe ran on, while Sophia, who had liſtened to Mr. Herbert's relation with the ſoft- eſt emotions of pity, tender- neſs, and joy, continued ſilent

with her eyes fixed upon the ground.

Mr. Herbert, willing to ſpare her delicacy, told Mrs. Darnley, that relying upon Sophia's good ſenſe and prudence, he had ventured to aſſure Sir Charles of a more favourable reception, when her prejudices were removed.

"He will come to-morrow, "my child," purſued he, "to "implore your pardon for all "the errors of his paſt conduct, "and to offer you his hand. "I am perſuaded you will act "properly upon this occaſion; "and in a marriage ſo far be-"yond your hopes and expec-"tations, acknowledge the hand "of Providence, which thinks "fit to reward you, even in

"this

"this world, for your ſteady ad-
"herence to virtue."

Sophia bowed and bluſhed; her mother, in a rapture, embraced and wiſhed her joy.

Mr. Herbert now endeavoured to change the converſation to ſubjects more indifferent; but Mrs. Darnley, ever thoughtleſs and unſeaſonable, could talk of nothing but Sir Charles, and the grandeur which awaited her daughter.

All night her fancy ran upon gilt equipages, rich jewels, magnificent houſes, and a train of ſervants; and ſhe was by much too happy to taſte any repoſe.

Sophia enjoyed the change of her fortune with much more rational delight; and among

all the ſentiments that aroſe in her mind upon this occaſion, that of gratitude to heaven was the moſt frequent and the moſt lively.

CHAP. XII.

CHAP. XLI.

The History concluded.

MR. Herbert, who had accepted a lodging in Sophia's cottage, went to Sir Charles the next day, according to his promiſe. He found him waiting for him full of anxious impatience; and hearing from the good old man, that Sophia was diſpoſed to receive him favourably, he embraced him in a tranſport of joy; and his chariot being already ordered, they drove immediately to the village.

Mrs. Darnley welcomed the baronet with a profuſion of civilities. Sophia's behaviour was full of dignity, mingled with

that ſoftneſs peculiar to her character.

Sir Charles, after a long converſation with her, obtained her leave to demand her of her mother, to whom he ſhewed the writings, which were already all drawn; and by which Sophia had a jointure and pin-money, equal to the ſettlements that had been made upon Lady Stanley.

He now ventured to intreat that a ſhort day might be fixed for their marriage. It was with great difficulty, that Sophia was prevailed upon to conſent; but her mother's impetuoſity carried all before it, and Mr. Herbert himſelf ſupported the young baronet's requeſt.

The ceremony was performed by Mr. Lawſon in his own parish-church

church: after which he and his amiable family accompanied the new wedded pair to their country-seat, where they passed several days with them.

Mr. Herbert having previously acquainted Sir Charles with Harriot's situation, the baronet, tho' he detested her character, and declared he never could pardon her for the miseries she had caused him; yet was desirous to have her decently settled, and promised to give a thousand pounds with her in marriage, if a reputable match could be found for her: he even put notes for that sum into Mr. Herbert's hands, and earnestly recommended it to him, to take the affair under his management.

Harriot, during the time she lived with her mother, had been courted

courted by a young tradeſman in tolerable circumſtances; and although ſhe thought it great inſolence for a perſon in buſineſs to pretend to her, yet, actuated by a true ſpirit of coquetry, while ſhe deſpiſed the lover, ſhe took pleaſure in his addreſſes.

This young man ſtill retained ſome tenderneſs for her, and allured by the proſpect of a fortune, was willing, notwithſtanding any faults in her conduct, to make her his wife.

Mrs. Darnley propoſed him to her, and Mr. Herbert enforced her advice with all the good ſenſe he was maſter of. But Harriot received the propoſal with the utmoſt diſdain, inſiſted that ſhe was married as well as her ſiſter; that her rank in life was ſuperior to hers; and added, by way of

threat, that her appearance ſhould be ſo likewiſe.

The extraordinary efforts ſhe made to ſupport this boaſt engaged lord L. in expences that entirely alienated his affections from her, diſguſted as he long had been with her inſolence and folly.

His relations concluded a match for him with a young lady of ſuitable rank and fortune; and, after making a ſmall ſettlement on Harriot, he took leave of her for ever.

The vexation ſhe felt from this incident, threw her into a diſtemper very fatal to beauty. The yellow jaundice made ſuch ravage in her face, that ſcarce any of thoſe charms on which ſhe had valued herſelf ſo much, remained. All her anxious hours were

were now employed in repairing her complexion, and in vain endeavours to reſtore luſtre to thoſe eyes, ſunk in hollowneſs, and tinctured with the hue of her diſtemper.

Although thus altered, the report of the fortune ſhe was likely to have made her be thought a prize worthy the ambition of a young officer, who had quitted the buſineſs of a peruke maker, in which he was bred, for an enſign's commiſſion, which made him a gentleman at once.

He offered himſelf to Harriot with that aſſurance of ſucceſs, which the gaiety of his appearance, and his title of captain, gave him reaſon to expect, with a lady of her turn of mind.

Harriot, charmed with ſo important

portant a conqueſt, ſoon conſented to give him her hand; and Sir Charles Stanley, finding his character not exceptionable, gave her the fortune he had promiſed, to which Sophia generouſly added a thouſand pounds more. The baronet procured her huſband a better commiſſion; but deſignedly in one of the colonies, whither he inſiſted upon his wife's accompanying him.

Harriot, in deſpair at being obliged to quit the delights of London, ſoon began to hate her huſband heartily, and he, entering into her diſpoſition and character, loſt all eſteem and tenderneſs for her. Her behaviour juſtified the rigid confinement he kept her in; and while ſhe ſuffered all the reſtraint of jea-

louſy,

louſy, ſhe was at the ſame time mortified with the knowledge that pride and not love was the ſource of it.

Mrs. Darnley lived not long after the departure of her favourite daughter, for ſo Harriot always continued to be.

Sophia attended her mother during her long illneſs with the moſt duteous care, and had the ſatisfaction to be aſſured by Mr. Lawſon, who aſſiſted her in her preparations for death, that her attachment to the world, which the affluent circumſtances to which ſhe was raiſed but too much increaſed, had at length given way to more pious ſentiments; and ſhe died with the reſignation of a chriſtian.

The ill conduct of her ſiſter, and the death of her mother,

proved

proved at first some interruption to Sophia's happiness; but these domestic storms blown over, she began to taste the good fortune which heaven had bestowed on her: her chief enjoyment of it was to share it with others; and Sir Charles, who adored her, put it amply in her power to indulge the benevolence of her disposition.

He took upon himself the care of rewarding her friends; he presented Mr. Lawson to a very considerable living: he procured Dolly's husband a genteel and lucrative employment; and married her sister to a relation of his own.

Mr. Herbert, who was above receiving any other gratification from Sir Charles than the entire friendship which he ever preserved

ſerved for him, had the ſatisfaction to ſpend moſt part of his time with his beloved daughter, as he uſed tenderly to call Sophia, and to behold her as happy as the condition of mortality admits of.

Sir Charles's tenderneſs for her ſeemed to increaſe every day; and when Mr. Herbert ſome years after this marriage took occaſion to compliment him upon the delicacy, the ardor, and the conſtancy of his affection, he replied, "You attribute to me "a virtue, which, in this caſe, "I cannot be ſaid to poſſeſs; "had my paſſion for my So-"phia been founded only on "the charms of her perſon, I "might probably ere now have "become a mere faſhionable "huſband; but her virtue and

"wit

"wit ſupply her with graces "ever varied, and ever new. "Thus the ſteadineſs of my af- "fection for her," purſued he, ſmiling, "is but a conſtant in- "conſtancy, which attaches me "ſucceſſively to one or other of "thoſe ſhining qualities, of which "her charming mind is an inex- "hauſtible ſource."

FINIS.